

THE FIVE CENT

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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE ST., N. Y.
NEW YORK, January 3, 1896.

{ PRICE }
5 CENTS.

Vol. II.

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TINKER'S MAN, BOGEY.



He was a little short, but he chanced to get hold of the locket and chain—little Emily's parting gift—and held Jack momentarily a prisoner, but holding on to the hand-rail with the energy of despair, our hero kicked out desperately and sent the mate reeling back.

TINKER'S MAN, BOGEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SICK MAN'S LEECH—JOVIAL CAPTAIN ROBINSON MEETS WITH A DISAPPOINTMENT—UGLY THOUGHTS.

WE must now return to Mr. Murray. Our readers will remember we left him stricken down with grief at the departure of his son in the ship *Albatross*.

He was borne away insensible by the policeman, and taken home to bed.

During Mr. Murray's illness his ravings were of so ugly a nature, that it was indeed fortunate no listeners were nigh, for some unpleasant rumors might have got abroad else.

One day, however, Captain Robinson came there to inquire after him.

The doctor's orders were that no one was to be admitted to the sick room.

But jovial Captain Robinson went up.

"My leech must be applied again," he muttered to himself.

At the very moment he crossed the threshold the sick man was raving wildly.

"Who calls the *Albatross* a coffin-ship? I'll have the law of any man that dares disparage my property—my own boy's on her—ha—ha! And would I let my own flesh and blood afloat in a doomed hull? Liars! Heavily insured! Of course she is—of course she is! and hark—hark! how the wind whistles, and how the waves moan before they send out their roar that foretells woe to the underwriters, and—hark! what was that?"

Jovial Captain Robinson was just a bit startled at this point.

The sick man started up in his bed, and said this so pointedly at the jovial captain, that the latter answered involuntarily:

"Which?"

"Did you not hear?—a cry for help! A despairing cry—a wail of agony, as the cruel waves close over the poor drowning wretch. What voice is that? Surely, I know it—yes—it is—it is my boy's."

And then the sick man cowered in his frenzy, up in a corner of the bed.

There was something very unpleasant in all this, and the jovial Captain Robinson turned pale.

"Dead, gone, are you, my poor, foolish boy?" said the patient, with a moan. "I have done it all—I—I—your fond, foolish old father, that would have given my heart's best blood to save you a pang. I ruined you firstly by my want of firmness and decision of character, and lastly, by my sternness, that came so suddenly upon him. But I'll not live! Why should I, when he's gone? There's no reason why I should. Get me a razor, nurse; I'll soon put an end to this. One good sharp stroke, and I'll take my head clean off; and hark you here."

He sank his voice to a loud whisper.

"When Robinson comes to put on the screw for hush money—his leech, as he calls it—you can throw my head at him—that'll show him—"

And the sick man gave a weird chuckle at this ghastly conceit.

Suddenly he seized himself by the throat and tried to strangle himself, but Robinson caught hold of him and held him down.

A sharp tussle ensued, for although Captain Robinson was a powerful man compared to Mr. Murray, yet the latter was nerved by frenzy, and he made a desperate fight for it.

At length the nurse came in and lent a hand.

And between them they contrived to strap the wretched man down, and put him out of the way of doing himself harm.

"A lucky thing you was here, sir," said the nurse; "I only left the room for a minute; but I should never dare to again—never."

Captain Robinson mumbled something, and glided out of the sick room, and into the street.

The color had left his cheek, and his jovial manners disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD A COFFIN SHIP—ALL HANDS TO THE PUMP—NAT CRINGLE LETS THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG.

A SHORT time after our friends Tinker and Bogeys had had their fun out with young Murray and Chivey, Jack and Harry were in deep conversation about the ship they were sailing in.

"Harry," said Jack, "what do you think of the ship, eh, old boy?"

"Well, Jack, I have been thinking that although they say the *Albatross* is such a clinker, she is certainly not famed for speed."

"Speed," echoed Young Jack, "why, I call her precious slow."

"Slow!" exclaimed a voice behind them; "I call her an old crawler."

They looked around, and there stood a big, sturdy sailor.

"That's strong language, Nat Cringle," said young Jack.

"Strong," quoth the sailor; "is it. Not stronger than I mean."

The boys stared.

"Whatever are you talking about?" said Harry Girdwood.

"The *Albatross*, if you please."

"I can't hear you disparage our own ship, Nat," said Jack; "it isn't proper, you know."

"What isn't proper? Which isn't proper, and why not?"

"Because she is between us and Davy Jones' locker."

"That's it," rejoined the sailor, quickly; "that's just it. But how long will she keep us so? That's the rub. Why, it's a downright, regular conjuring trick to keep her afloat."

"Well, Cringle," said Harry Girdwood, "I never heard a man speak so yet of the ship he had just taken service in."

"Bah, they pay me well for that."

"But payment could not recompense you for risking your life," said Harry Girdwood.

"Couldn't it, though?" exclaimed Nat Cringle. "And why not, pray? Have I not often risked my life for less?"

"Do you really mean, Cringle," said Jack, "that you think the *Albatross* isn't seaworthy?"

"Seaworthy? Why, there's not a sound plank in her. It's a coffin ship. Nothing more nor less," said Nat Cringle; "and old Murray's got a new line on that'll suit his book right enough—old Murray, the wholesale undertaker, as we used to call him."

"But why on earth the wholesale undertaker?" asked Jack.

"Because he's buried such lots of people. I suppose you didn't know about all this?"

"No."

"It looked oddish that you should join such a ship," said Nat Cringle; "but I supposed that there was some sort of a reason for it. Howsoever, I recommend you to keep a sharp look-out on me when she settles."

"You don't think really that the *Albatross* is in immediate danger?"

"Difficult to say, that. But you just look how she is plugged up with goods. Low freight, you know. See how low she is in the water, and see the way she labors along. Why, she has weight enough of cargo to founder a good ship, let alone such a coffin ship as this."

"Does she make much water?"

"Does she not?" exclaimed Nat Cringle; "hark at the pumps working incessantly. I have been pumping this hour and more. But you only wait until we get a little weather, and then you'll see. You go and help work at the pumps, and see how little you can do to—"

"Work at the pumps?" repeated a voice, close by.

It was Mr. Figgins, the Cockney orphan, who had again ventured on deck.

"Yes."

"What do you mean, pray, by working at the pumps?"

Young Jack winked at the sailor and Harry.

"They are going to give the crew and passengers a dance," said he; "and Nat Cringle has been a shoemaker—he has to repair the dancing shoes—the pumps, you see."

"Dear me," exclaimed Mr. Figgins, in surprise, "how very singular the manners and customs of life at sea are."

"Very."

"You'll join in the merry dance, I suppose?" said Jack.

"No; not at present. I thought I was getting better; but when the ship rocks, I really feel the old feeling coming on."

"You're not well yet?"

"No, I have not been well ever since I came on board," replied the orphan, with a faint air of embarrassment.

"Still sick?"

"Oh, dear no."

"I thought not. You are too much of a Jack tar for that, now."

"Rather!"

Mr. Figgins had got his notions of an ideal sailor from Mr. T. F. Cooke, and the other stage mariners, and he essayed to give that well-known hitch to his trousers.

But the effort or jerk, and a heavy roll of the ship, caused a return of those unpleasant symptoms which the orphan was subject to.

So he clapped his hand to his mouth, and beat a precipitate retreat to the ship's side.

"Nat Cringle," said young Jack, seriously, "I hope that you exaggerate the danger of this ship."

"Don't you hope anything of the kind, young gentleman," said Nat Cringle, "or you'll be disappointed. I ain't exaggerated nothing. The *Albatross* is neither more nor less than a coffin ship, and the very next storm that comes on, down she goes."

Jack and Harry looked grave.

They were no cowards.

Those of our readers who have followed them through their various adventures, need no assertion to this effect.

"If the *Albatross* foundered in mid-ocean, you would have but a poor chance of saving your life."

"Who spoke of mid-ocean?" said Nat Cringle.

"But—"

"Don't you jump at no rash conclusions, young gentleman. The *Albatross* will founder, but not in mid-ocean, as long as I have half a chance of handling the helm. Let her have a fair run for the Spanish coast."

"What I should like more than anything else would be—"

"What?"

The honest tar looked anxiously around him.

"Just to run her into port, and get her condemned by the British consul and Lloyd's people, just to pay the varmints out who traffic in honest men's lives. They'd lose their insurance money—ay, and they'd lose their freight, too."

"What a noble notion," ejaculated Jack.

"Yes, rather tidy, ain't it?" added the sailor. "But to do this proper, we want one thing."

"What?"

"To square the skipper."

"I should think that he's in with the owner and the other villains," suggested Harry Girdwood.

"That's just what I should like to know," said Nat Cringle, thoughtfully. "Captain Deering ain't no fool, he ain't. He knows his dooty—no man better—every rope in the ship, and every plank—ay, and what's more, he weren't on board six hours before he knew every man Jack of us aboard by our names. So I can't make out why he should take service in such a rotten old hull, unless there was some particular reasons for it that no one knows about."

"He didn't know anything about it," said Jack, positively.

Nat Cringle eyed the speaker sharply.

"Why?"

"Because he told me that he had been sent for express to town, when it was known that Captain Robinson was too ill to go out."

Nat Cringle burst out into a boisterous laugh.

"What's that for?"

"Cap'n Robinson was about as ill as I am this 'ere blessed moment," he answered, with an oath. "Cap'n Robinson values his precious skin too much to go afloat in such a ship as the *Albatross*. He never meant to go."

The boys were literally staggered at this.

"Nat," said Jack, "my father's rich, and the best man that ever drew breath. He will take in hand this rascal Murray, and punish him."

"Bless you, your honor," ejaculated the tar, quite moved; "you're the right sort, you are."

"But I shall have to get the chance to do this act of justice," said young Jack.

"It'll come."

"But if the ship should sink?" said Jack.

"Look here, your honor," said Nat Cringle, "the *Albatross* will go down, that's a moral sartainty; but you stick close by me, whenever she's in trouble, and we'll sink or swim together. And I for one don't mean sinking."

"Give us your had upon that," said Harry Girdwood.

"Here it is," said the honest tar, thrusting out a huge horny palm, "and here's the t'other for you, Master Jack, nearest the 'art, you know. But mum! here comes the second mate, d-d ugly swab, betwixt you and me and the bed post!"

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUTHFUL SWELL NEXT TO JACK'S CABIN
—THE TALE OF THE CHECK-BOOK—THE HOLE
IN THE PANEL—A SHINE ON DECK!—THE
THREATENED MUTINY—JUST IN TIME.

THE youthful swell Murray was so dissatisfied with his cabin that he removed to one with more comforts, and that one happened by chance to be next to our friend Young Jack.

"Chivey," said the master.

"Sir," said the man.

"Give me a soda."

"And b., sir?"

"Of course!"

"It's all very well to say of course, sir," said Mr. Chivey; "but the fact is the steward won't give us much more tick."

"The steward's a puppy, Chivey," said Herbert Murray; "he knows that I am the owner's son; tell him I must be attended to."

"Very good."

"And tell him if he makes any bones about it, I'll get him discharged from the ship as safe as my name's Herbert Murray."

"Very good, sir."

Chivey disappeared, and young Murray waited impatiently for his return.

"I'm always thirsty," he muttered; "should like to have S. and B. laid on by a sort of New River Company."

A merry voice in the adjoining cabin broke in upon his reverie with a snatch of a song.

"My name d'ye see's Tom Tough,
And I've seen a deal of service."

"Blow his service, and him too," muttered Mr. Murray Junior. "That's that beast of a Jack Harkaway, I know."

"That's him, sir."

"Halloo!"

The master turned around, and there stood the man at the door.

"What are you spying upon me for, Chivey?" he said.

"Spying ain't in my line, sir," retorted the tiger. "I was only a-watchin' of you."

"The same thing."

"Not quite."

"Silence! You hear Harkaway in the next cabin?"

"Oh, I hear, sir."

And well he might, for young Jack was swelling out his voice.

"And if more you would be knowin',
I have sailed with bold Boscawen."

"He's getting on a nautical chant," said Mr. Chivey, "to make hisself believe that he don't feel queer."

"I've watched him," groaned young Murray, "and I know he doesn't; he was rollicking about all over the ship, when I was half dead with seasickness, hang him."

"Don't you get impatient, sir," said the tiger, "and I can put you up to a wrinkle."

"What is it?"

"Something extra double artful, sir. O. T. Q."

"Out with it; you know how I hate beating about the bush!" exclaimed Herbert Murray, impatiently.

"Keep your 'air on, sir, I beg," said the tiger, "and I'll tell you all about it; you know this ship is made of sliding boards."

He crept up to the end of the cabin, and gently slid back a small trap.

At the same time he blew out the lamp, which was burning upon the table, so that they were in total darkness.

Through the hole they could see all that was passing.

There was young Jack seated at a desk in which were displayed a number of letters and papers upon which he was engaged.

At the moment that the two spies, for they were nothing less, peeped through, Harry Girdwood was entering the cabin.

And now they could not only see, but they could hear every word that was uttered, as distinctly as if they had been in the cabin with the speakers.

"Jack."

"What now?" said young Harkaway, looking up.

"I've been thinking over what Nat Cringle said."

"So have I; the danger we are now in is great, for a heavy storm might come upon us at any time."

"Now, supposing we got ashore off the coast yonder?"

Here Herbert Murray looked nervously around at the tiger, who pressed his master's arm warmly.

"Well?"

"I want to see Spain," continued Jack, "the land of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and Gil Blas and Don Juan and Figaro and Almaviva, and such a lot more people we are all acquainted with in books and plays."

"That's all very well, Jack, but we are short of money."

"No, the governor gave me a check-book, and I have only to fill in the checks for any amount I like, and get them cashed through any banker, in any civilized city. We would have to wait while they authenticated the checks, and there's tin for you to any reasonable amount."

As he spoke, he flourished a check-book in his hand.

"You must keep that in your pocket always."

"I do."

"Wrap it in an oil skin, and fasten it about your body, for if any accident happened—"

"And we had to swim for it?"

"Yes."

"It would be safe enough, and as for swimming for it, why—"

At this juncture a hoarse voice was heard giving orders on deck, and it stopped their talk.

"All hands to the pumps!"

"Hark!"

"I hear."

"Anything worse than usual, I wonder?" said Harry.

Murmurs were heard on deck so loud that the grumbling tones reached them distinctly.

Harry Girdwood ran up the cabin stairs to see what was going forward.

"The men are grumbling," said he, turning around towards Jack.

"At what?"

"This unceasing working at the pumps. They get no rest."

"All hands pump ship!" sang out the second mate.

A muttered menace was heard to come from one of the crew.

This was the signal for a low growl—low, but general.

And, as it went on, it seemed to gather force like a distant storm.

"Jack."

"Yes, Harry."

"It is getting serious. Get your pistols and let us go up on deck. The mate may want assistance."

"I'm with you," said Jack.

He dropped his check-book on to the desk, and sticking his pistols into his belt, up he ran.

Matters were growing serious on deck.

The wind had freshened and the glass fell rapidly, denoting that some dirty weather was to be expected.

A heavy swell had set the *Albatross* rolling, and the water was now gaining fast upon her.

The gale, which had been gradually working its way up to them, caught the ship at last with greater suddenness than they could reasonably have expected.

But Captain Deering was prompt to meet the emergency.

The upper fore and main top-sails were reefed.

The mizzen sail was furled.

The rain came down in buckets, and the men were working deep in water upon deck.

The men had deputed a spokesman to go to the skipper to ask for an extra allowance of grog.

And, surely, if any circumstances could warrant such a license, this was the opportunity to grant it.

But the captain being busily occupied, the men referred their request to the mate, a surly and ill-natured fellow, who refused it point blank.

The wind increased, and as the heavy cross sea caught her, the ship labored and creaked, and strained continually, causing Nat Cringle to sing out, ironically, from time to time:

"There's music for you, lads!"

And as the wind continued, the ship lurched and rolled fearfully.

Now and again a heavier sea than usual would break clean over the deck, washing everything before it, and carrying the men away from the pumps to land them in the lee scuppers all in a heap, bruised and marked about dreadfully.

When young Jack and his comrade, Harry, got on deck, the crew were assembled all in a group talking to the second mate, and the conversation had grown remarkably warm.

"We've been up to our waists in water, Mr. Mackenzie," said the spokesman, "and we think you really ought to serve us out an extra allowance."

"I'm of a different way of thinking," replied the mate, who was a temperance man; "and I'll just do nae such thing."

The men murmured.

"Let us see the captain," said one.

"Ay—ay; the captain."

"Yes—yes," called a third.

"Ye'll do nae such thing," said the mate, obstinately. "Captain Deering has deputed me to see you, and—"

"Well, then, if you stop the grog, I won't go to the pumps, for one—that's flat," replied the man.

"Ye mutinous thief!" roared the mate. "I'll clap ye in irons in no time."

"Ye'd better not try it, Sandy," said the sailor, threateningly.

"Drop him overboard," suggested one of the men.

Now whether this suggestion would have been acted upon, it is not easy to say.

Before it could be put to the test, young Jack and Harry Girdwood appeared on deck, and quickly as quietly they ranged themselves beside Mackenzie the mate.

"Come—come, my men," said Jack, showing his pistols, "stand back, no mutineering here."

"We don't want to mutiny, Master Jack; we've only made a very reasonable request."

"Ay—ay," said Jack. "What is it, my men?"

"Give us some rum."

"Silence."

"Not a drop," cried Mackenzie, vehemently.

"Down with him!" cried the sailors.

"Stand back, men!" cried Jack.

It was a very ticklish moment.

"I won't countenance anything like mutiny or insubordination," said Jack, "but put your request into more respectful language, and Mr. Mackenzie will, I am sure, listen to you, if it is reasonable."

"You're making sure before your time, then," said the mate, ungraciously.

"Sir?"

"Did ye no hear what I said? Ye've no right to promise anything in my name. Ye've just a wee bit over fast, and it ill becomes ye."

"Come—come, Mr. Mackenzie, don't be vexed with me," said Jack, good-naturedly. "I spoke only for the good of the ship."

"Hold your tongue, boy."

"Will you not let the men have some grog, sir?"

"No," cried the Scotch mate, furiously; "and if you—"

"Stop—stop, sir," said young Jack, "you've no need to threaten me. I came to assist you—"

"Dom yere impudence," cried Mackenzie.

"But since you don't want it—"

"Nor you either. Go forward, you young imp, ye—ye—"

"Save your breath to cool your porridge, sir," said young Jack, coolly. "Stay here, Harry, to see that Mr. Mackenzie doesn't get into any trouble while I step aft and talk to Captain Deering."

The mate raged.

However, Jack did not wait to hear his retort.

Young Jack went straight up to the skipper at once.

"Captain Deering, may I have one word with you, please?"

"Just one, Mr. Harkaway," returned the skipper, "only be quick about it, if you please."

At this moment a deep, threatening growl was heard from the men on deck.

After a pause, the captain fiercely asked:

"Well, what is all this fuss about?"

"The men have been working like steam engines hour after hour, sir, knee deep in water, and not a man, sir, among them, has a dry thread on him. They want some rum," responded young Jack.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let them have it at once—at once. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Off with you."

"Excuse me, captain, they have asked Mr. Mackenzie already, and he refused."

"Oh!"

"Well, I wouldn't ask after that, but they are grumbling and look precious ugly, but he holds out, so that I really fear some harm may come to him."

"He's a fool," muttered the captain.

And then he gave orders to the steward to serve out grog all around.

Meanwhile, Harry Girdwood was boldly confronting the mutineers, who, awed by his pistols, hung back, hardly daring to commit the violence they had it in their minds to do.

Oaths and curses were hurled at the head of the mate, but they all admired the boy's pluck, though he stood in their way.

It is doubtful, though, whether he would have been able to keep them at bay much longer, had not young Jack returned with the welcome news that they were to have the rum.

A cheer greeted this announcement, and then the steward made his appearance.

"I hope, Mr. Mackenzie," said Jack, stepping up to the mate, "that you'll not take offense at what I've done."

"If ye think to palaver me over," said Mackenzie, sullenly, "ye're mistaken. Ye think to mak' a fule o' me befoor the crew. Weel, I shall yet ha' the opportunity o' showing ye that it's no' the best day's wark o' yer life to mak a fule o' Donald Mackenzie."

"All hands pump ship!" sang out Captain Deering, as soon as the men had swallowed their rum.

"Ay—ay, sir."

The men flew to work again with alacrity at this.

"Now, Mr. Mackensie," called the captain, "tumble about, please—look lively."

The Scotch mate growled something inaudible, and moved away.

CHAPTER IV.

MASTER AND MAN—THE POSITIONS REVERSED—TIGER CHIVEY "PLAYS ARTFUL," AND HIS MASTER MAKES A VERY FALSE MOVE—THE FORGED CHECKS AND THE SLIDING TRAP IN THE CABIN PANEL.

MURRAY and Chivey had remained all this time in their cabin.

"That Harkaway cove has left his checkbook behind him," said Chivey.

"What then?"

"Why, by just putting my arm through this little 'ole I can get at it."

"Chivey, I forbid you to do anything of the sort."

The tiger had dived his arm through the hole in the paneling, and in the twinkling of an eye, held young Jack's checkbook under his master's nose.

"But I have done it, sir; look here," cried Chivey.

"Chivey, this won't do for me."

"Oh, it will for me, though. Why, with just one little lark with the checkbook, you could pepper him nicely for all that precious sewing up he give you ashore."

"I shouldn't object to do that," returned Herbert Murray, "but I would do anything—"

Chivey interrupted his master with a cry of delight and amazement.

"My hi, and Elizabeth Martin! What a slap-up lark!"

"What is it?"

"Look here!"

He pushed the open checkbook under young Murray's eyes, and there was a check already written and signed by Jack for twenty pounds.

Jack had got it ready for some purpose or other at the very moment that he had been called up on deck by the mutinous demonstrations of the crew.

"It is strange why he should leave the check in the book."

"Perhaps it was meant for your own especial benefit, sir."

Mr. Chivey cocked his head on one side in his own peculiar fashion.

"Whatever do you mean by that, Chivey?" asked the master.

"Only this, sir—if I could only write like you, I'd fill up every blessed check in the book and make presents of 'em to all the 'ospitals and charities and such."

Herbert Murray's eyes flashed again at this.

"By jingo! that would be a lark, and serve young Harkaway out."

"Rather!"

The tiger saw that he had got his weak and vacillating master upon the right track, and he saw also that it would not do to press the matter unduly.

"Wouldn't that ugly young rascal stare when

he found out that he had subscribed to a charity—or charities—without knowing it?"

"Would he not?" exclaimed Chivey; "only you couldn't imitate the signature near enough to match with that."

"You never made a greater mistake in your life, Chivey, than to suppose that."

"You don't mean to say, sir, that you really could?" exclaimed the tiger, with a look that combined incredulity and admiration.

Chivey knew that weak-headed young master of his well. No one better.

He could do more with Herbert Murray with a mere look than could the latter's father accomplish by dint of praises and reproaches, coaxing and scolding, severity and leniency combined.

And the singularity of the affair was that Chivey really commanded while he appeared to obey.

Murray snatched up a pen, and wrote in imitation of Jack's signature.

Chivey gave his master an admiring glance.

"Well, there!" he exclaimed, turning his eyes upwards and seeming to address the roof of the cabin, "if he ain't just about the tallest thing out in fly covers, I wish I may die a old maid!"

"Oh, there's nothing very wonderful in that, Chivey," said his master, with an off-hand air.

"Ain't there? Why, nobody could tell but what it was young Harkaway's writing. Have a check out of his book, sir; you do imitate him so well."

"Yes, it ain't bad, is it?" said Herbert, taking up the pen again, and involuntarily copying the signature of young Jack Harkaway at the foot of a blank check and then a second.

The tiger looked on greatly interested.

"Beautiful!" ejaculated Chivey, "lovely. Dot the hi, sir!"

"Where?"

"In junior."

"It doesn't matter!"

"Oh, dot his hi; he dotted yours pretty smartly for you, didn't he?—ha-ha!"

This was a mistake.

"What the devil do you mean by that, you impudent scoundrel?" exclaimed Herbert Murray; for this was a very sore topic to joke upon.

Chivey with his wonted quickness, saw his error.

But he had not been able to resist the joke.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, saluting his master, and pulling a face as grave as a mute's, "couldn't help it, sir—no offense."

"Don't you learn to be too familiar, Chivey, or I'll give you the bag! You mustn't learn to forget your place, because I'm civil to you."

"No, sir."

"You'll just about spoil yourself if you do, let me tell you. Now you may not earn much now—"

"It isn't to say a downright fortune, sir."

"No, perhaps not—but I shall have a pot of tin one of these days, and it will be a fortune to you, if you know how to behave yourself."

"Thankee, sir," responded the tiger, "I don't want a fortune, so long as you keep me on."

"Very well, then. It entirely depends on yourself."

"Yes, sir—"

* * * * *

Chivey looked wistfully at those two signed checks.

And as he looked, his speculative mind shot ahead into the future.

He fancied he saw in those two strips of paper the means of making himself safe—of putting his position beyond the mere caprice of his shifty young master.

But how?

This we shall see.

Meanwhile it may be well to remark that Chivey, with all his shrewdness, had yet to learn that to speculate upon the remote future was rash, seeing that if the weather did not speedily improve, the *Albatross* was likely to prove the coffin for one and all on board—for passengers as well as crew.

"Just listen, sir, what a row they are making overhead."

"That's Jack Harkaway's voice. He's coming down, Chivey, exclaimed his master, anxiously, "put back the checkbook."

"Yes, sir."

The tiger obeyed.

And in obeying, somehow or another, the two signed checks found their way into Chivey's pocket.

"Push to the trap."

"It's down, sir—close as wax."

"I hope they won't see it from the other side."

"Never a bit, sir."

"Then up on deck, and see what all this precious hubbub is about, Chivey."

"Yes, sir."

The tiger turned upon the cabin steps, and gave his master a parting glance of admiration.

And he disappeared up the steps on deck.

Young Murray fully believed in Chivey's adulation, and accepted it as justifiable homage.

Silly young fool!

He had just added forgery to his varied and unenviable accomplishments.

Forgery has an ugly sound; yet forgery it was.

Moreover, this crafty, cunning young man about town, had left in the possession of his own wicked servant, the proofs of his crime.

CHAPTER V.

LISTENERS HEAR BAD NEWS OCCASIONALLY.

"I SAY, Jack," exclaimed Harry Girdwood, when they returned to their cabin, "that's rather careless of you, leaving your checkbook out."

"No fear; no one came down here, they had too much to do on deck."

"True," answered cautious Harry, "but you can't be too careful with your checkbook."

"True, but my own opinion is, that unless we look remarkably lively, the checkbook won't be of any particular use to any of us."

"I don't think it is as bad as that," replied Harry.

"I do; the rotten old tub is as nearly water-logged as possible. Let a few more seas break over her and down she'll go, as sure as my name's Jack."

* * * * *

At this moment Chivey tottered down the companion-ladder to his master.

His cheeks were ashy pale, and he had not a word to say for himself, for he absolutely quaked with fear.

But his master did not want to learn the news from Chivey.

He was stretched at full length in his berth, with his ear close to the panel, and he could hear every word of the conversation going forward between Jack Harkaway, junior, and his comrade, Harry.

"Hush, listen," he whispered, warily, to Chivey.

The tiger obeyed.

And this is what they both overheard together.

"I mean to put on my cork clothing," said Jack; "get yours ready too, Harry, at once."

"Very good."

"And meanwhile, in case of accidents, I mean to scribble out a little information, and stick the paper into a corked and sealed bottle."

"What's the good of that?"

"Lots," replied Jack; "if we go down to Davy Jones, it will be saying good-by to all our friends at home, and it will show up that murderous old thief, Murray, to the world."

"But Mr. Murray's own son is on board."

"Yes."

"Well, then, nobody will believe that he sent his own flesh and blood afloat in a coffin ship."

"But he didn't know that his son was here. According to Captain Deering's own showing, the young fellow took his passage, with his servant, under assumed names, so as to dodge his father. But I'm sorry for the son," said Jack, "for he's very little chance of saving himself, and unless the wind drops, the *Albatross* will never float twelve hours more!"

* * * * *

"Chivey!"

Herbert Murray's voice was hoarse with terror.

"Yes, sir."

"Bring me something to drink—some brandy and water."

"I ain't got time," replied his servant; "I've got to look after myself now, and put on my lifebelt, for I mean to have a good hard try for it."

"What do the men say on deck?"

"They are getting ready the boats, and some are talking of a raft."

Herbert Murray sank back with a groan, burying his face in his hands.

Meanwhile, young Jack was writing out his statement of the case to expose the shipowner's villainy.

And this being done, he enclosed it, together with a hastily-written farewell to his father and

mother, little Emily, and friends, in a bottle, which was tightly corked and sealed.

Then it was committed to the waves.

"Now for the lifebelts!"

CHAPTER VI.

BETTER NEWS—THE SKIPPER MEETS AN OLD COMRADE—STRANGE REVELATIONS—THE CAPTAIN'S RESOLVE—"WE'LL DO THEM YET, BY THE LORD HARRY!"

Now, while preparations were made for dire extremities below, matters grew better above.

The wind lulled, and Captain Deering exclaimed, in the fullness of his heart.

"We shall pull her through now, the rotten old sponge!"

"For the present, sir," said a voice, close to his ear.

Captain Deering turned around, and there was Nat Cringle.

"Halloo, my man!" he said, biting his lip with vexation; "you oughtn't to be at my elbow to pick up every word I may happen to let fall."

Nat Cringle pulled his forelock in salute, and gave an apologetic scrape with his foot.

"All right, captain, I'm mum. Axing your pardon, I took the liberty o' speaking on the score of this not being the first nor the tightest scrape we've been in together."

"We!"

"Yes, sir."

"I scarcely remember," murmured the captain, in the voice of one diving back into the past; "and yet I should know your voice. Why, let me think."

"Don't your honor remember the *Lively Polly*?"

Here he broke out into a snatch of a sea song: "If you wish to know the liveliest craft that ever sailed from port, Why, that's my Polly—the *Lively Polly*—and she's a rare good sort."

"The *Lively Polly*!" quoth Captain Deering; "I should think I do remember, and now, Nat Cringle, I remember you."

"Oh!"

"Nat Cringle's your name, is it not?"

"Ay—ay, sir."

"Tip me your fin, Nat Cringle," said the skipper, heartily; "I'm precious glad to sail with an old comrade. Why, where have you been all these long years, shipmate?"

"Knocking about, cap'n," replied the sailor, "up and down—oftener down than up, if the real truth be spoken."

"And so, Nat, you think the *Albatross* will only pull through for the present?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"Your honor needn't ask that," replied the sailor, "seeing as you know all about the ship now as much as I do."

"Ay, Nat Cringle, but from the way you speak, you show me that you have known something more about the *Albatross* than you choose to tell for a long while past."

"Not more than you, captain," said Nat Cringle. "Leastways, I suppose not, considering as you've embarked in the same venture as me."

"You suppose so?"

"Ay—ay, sir."

"Tell that to the marines, Joe," said Captain Deering, "sailors won't believe it. We all know what you believe. You know as well as possible that I only came up at the eleventh hour to take Captain Robinson's place when he was taken ill."

Nat laughed.

"When what?"

"When Captain Robinson was taken ill, I say."

"Ha—ha!" laughed Nat Cringle, grimly. "You know all about that, sir."

"What?"

"Why, about Captain Robinson's illness."

"I don't quite know what you are driving at, Nat," said Captain Deering.

There was a peculiar look in his eyes, and a strange twang in his voice that told as plainly as possible that his suspicions were aroused by the sailor's manner.

"I'll tell you, Captain Deering," replied Nat; "I know, and you know, too—leastways your honor ought to know—that Captain Robinson was about as ill as I am at this present moment."

"What?"

"Of course you know he was only shamming."

The skipper broke in indignantly at this.

"Do you know, Nat, what you are saying?"

Captain Robinson is one of my best and oldest friends."

"The devil he is!" said Nat Cringle. "Why, then, he ought to have a round dozen, and be tarred and feathered and pitched overboard, the swab!"

Nat Cringle's manner was so full of downright earnestness that the skipper could not mistake it.

"Do you really think, old shipmate," he said, earnestly, sinking his voice to a whisper, "that Captain Robinson—"

He paused.

He could not bring himself to put his thoughts into words.

Nat nodded.

"Yes, sir," he said, "that's just it. He knew well enough; it's all a game—a sort of play at life and death. They speculate with money for your life and for ours, and the best news that they could hear would be that the rotten old *Albatross* had gone to the bottom, and with her every mortal soul on board!"

Captain Deering walked aft in great emotion.

After pacing the deck for several minutes he came back to where Nat Cringle stood, stock still, awaiting him.

"Nat Cringle," he said, earnestly, "we have sailed together often enough, and we have faced death too often together for there to be any deception or concealment between us."

"Ay—ay, sir."

"How came it that, knowing this, you are here?"

"Because I know very well," returned the old salt, with the same air of conviction that he had previously shown in his conversation with Jack and Harry Girdwood, "that nothing can hurt me—that, come weal, come woe, I sha'n't go to the bottom."

The skipper looked amazed at this declaration.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"You think that you bear a charmed life?"

"If you like to put it like that, your honor," returned the sailor, smiling; "I feel that I can't go down, else I shouldn't have come aboard the *Albatross*, nor, in fact, any ship belonging to old Murray."

"I don't understand you quite, Nat."

"It's easy understood, cap'n," returned Nat Cringle, warming up on his favorite theme. "He gets hold of some rotten old hull that's been condemned, and dodges it up with paint and putty, and he gets a cargo in a strange port. Then he puffs it up and gets hold of a captain whose name is well known amongst the merchants and shippers, and so gets hold of passengers and cargo. The more passengers the better, you see. Well, he and Captain Robinson have worked this job together, and a nice bargain they've made of it. Captain Robinson never meant sailing in her, of course. He waits till the last moment, and then he gets hold of you."

Captain Deering here interrupted him with a boisterous exclamation.

"Do you know how he got hold of me, Nat Cringle?"

"No, sir."

"Then I'll tell you. I was in trouble up in London. I was in precious low water. My name was on a heavy bill for a poor devil who's gone queer, and they were going to nab me for it, to lodge me in limbo."

"The swabs."

"Well, I looked up my pals to help me through, and I thought of my old mate Robinson. He sent me word that he couldn't help me with money, that he was very ill, but that he could get me a ship at once, and start me off before the sharks could get scent of my whereabouts. Down I came on the sly and took ship."

"The mean, artful son of a sea cook," ejaculated honest Nat Cringle.

"I begin to see clear now, Nat," said the skipper, thoughtfully; "and if I don't spoil their speculations, you can call me all the lubbers you can lay your tongue to."

Nat Cringle grew quite excited at this.

"Captain Deering, would your honor be offended at a suggestion?"

"Offended, Nat! There's no shame to any sailor, whatever his grade, in asking your advice, old comrade."

"Thank your honor. Well, then—"

"Your advice?"

"Put her about, and let us run for the nearest port. Have the British consul on board, and let the ship be surveyed. If Lloyd's agent gets over her after the straining she's undergone in this gale, she'll be condemned as sure as eggs is eggs."

The skipper looked about him, and took an earnest survey of the weather signs.

"Nat Cringle," he said, clapping the old salt on the shoulder, "it shall be done. If the rotten *Albatross* will hold together, we'll do them yet, by the Lord Harry."

CHAPTER VII.

A WRINKLE IN PUMPING—THE SOUNDING ROD—JACK READS THE OLDEST TAR ON BOARD A LESSON.

CAPTAIN DEERING had the men served with another allowance of grog.

And again he sang out the order so often heard in this short voyage:

"All hands pump ship!"

This time it was readily, if not quite cheerfully obeyed.

As Nat Cringle said, the constant bending over the pumps strained their backs woefully.

"If I go on much longer," said another tar, ruefully, "damme if I sha'n't get as humpty-backed as King Dick in the play."

"There's a simple remedy for that, my men," said young Jack, promptly.

"What is it?"

"Rig up bell-ropes on to the pumps and you won't have to stoop."

"Bravo!"

They set to it at once.

A bell-ropes is a short rope with a thimble, or iron ring spliced into one end.

The thimbles were slipped over the handles.

This done, the men tailed on to the ropes to pull the handles around.

By dint of this simple artifice the work was done quicker and better, and with half the fatigue.

When next they sounded the well, there was no abatement.

This naturally discouraged the men, who murmured ominously.

One old fellow, with grizzly hair and beard, dropped off, and swore a good round oath that he would work no more.

"She's settling," he said; and a look of dismay was seen upon most of the anxious faces present.

"I don't believe it."

"You don't believe it!" said the old fellow, fiercely. "What does a boy like you know about it? I tell you she's going down."

"I tell you, then, Norris," said young Jack, firmly, "she's doing no such thing; and if she were, why, that's no reason why you should desert your duty."

"More I don't," retorted the sailor, savagely, "only at the last gasp, and I mean to make a kick for it. As long as it's of use I was willing to pump; but now she's going down, I mean to save my breath, and not be so pumped."

Jack saw with a sinking heart that several of the men were about to follow the old sailor's example.

"Wait a bit—wait a bit," he exclaimed, eagerly, "and I'll soon show you that I'm right and he's wrong."

The old man grunted.

"Give him a chance, Norris!" cried Nat Cringle.

"Damme, give him fair play."

"Every time we've sounded the well for the last twenty-four hours," said young Jack, "it has gained upon us—slowly, very slowly, thanks to our hard struggle with it—yet none the less surely."

"It has."

"And that's cold comfort to give us," growled Norris.

"Well, the last time we sounded, it was stationary."

"What of that?"

"Stow your gaff!" interrupted Nat Cringle, "Damme, you're enough to make the Pope o' Rome swear. Don't you see what Master Harkaway is a-driving at?"

"No."

"Then you must ha' got your figger'eds stuffed with sawdust instead of brains. Why, if it's a level fight now, or on last soundings, with the water, why, it's better than it was before, inasmuch and seeing as how it had us at a disadvantage before."

"Nat Cringle has just said what I was trying to get at," said Jack. "Now listen."

"Ay—ay?"

"Let us have one more shy," said young Jack; "I'll take Norris's place, for we don't want any half-hearted coves this turn."

"And I'll take Marshall's," said Harry Girdwood.

"Bravo!" said one of the sailors.

The cheer was caught up readily, for the example of these plucky youngsters was the very

thing to give a fillip to these poor worn-out sailors, and worn out they were and no mistake, every man of them.

"Now, Norris," said Jack, "you go and sound the well."

"Ay—ay, sir!"

In the course of a few moments back came old Norris with "a face as long as a fiddle," as one of the sailors remarked.

"A fiddle!" quoth Jack. "A bass-viol you mean."

At this they all laughed.

The old man gave his report with a precious lugubrious air.

It was serious, and Jack felt it to be so.

"Now then, mates," cried Nat Cringle; "no more palaver; but let's go in and give her a proper doing for a spell, and if we don't make the sounding-rod tell a warstly different tale in the splicing of a mainbrace, you may ever call me the darndest loblolliboy as ever smashed his grinders over a twel'month-old ship biscuit."

This made the men grin.

Young Jack struck up a snatch of an old song, slightly altered for the occasion—

"Pull away merrily,

Pull away cheerily.

Send the pumps' fly-wheels all fast spinning 'round.

Each try at the bell ropes

Hightens our well hopes,

And the rod shall encourage us when next we sound."

The air was brisk and lively, and Jack's impromptu doggerel was more welcome to those hard-working tars than the Laureate's most polished stanzas would have been.

The men caught up the chorus all together.

The fly-wheels did go around as Jack sang.

"Halloo!" cried one of the sailors, "here comes old Norris again with his report."

"Jest look at his winegar mug," said another.

"Now, Norris."

"Speak up, man," said Jack.

"Out with it!" cried a sailor, impatiently.

"What's the verdict?" said another.

"Well," says Norris, putting a plug of cavendish into his cheek with aggravating deliberation, "this young fellow was right—I was wrong; and what's more, I'm not fool enough to be sorry to own myself licked by such a proper young cove."

"Bravo, Norris!"

But Norris, heedless of the approving cheer, only turned to Jack Harkaway.

"Give us your flipper, youngster," he said; "if you only live to be my age, you'll be able to take a rise out of any post-captain in the Royal Navy—ay, damme! and the port admiral into the bargain."

Jack grinned.

The men cheered.

"This is all right and proper, Norris," said Nat Cringle, who was a little gratified with his crusty old shipmate's conduct; "but how about the well?"

"Why, you see, some folks—"

"Awast, Ned, awast," exclaimed Nat; "no yarn."

"Well, then, we've gained just four inches on her."

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" yelled the men.

"Tune up again, Jack," cried Harry Girdwood, excitedly, "and let's have one more go."

"Pull away merrily,
Pull away cheerily—"

"Hold'ard, there," cried Norris, pulling young Jack away; "you take a turn at the sounding too, and let this d—d obstinate old grampus get back to his dooty."

* * * * *

Young Jack made three soundings, and reported each time.

The lad's manner seemed to fire the men with new energy every time he returned to report.

The third time he come back from sounding the well.

"How are we getting on?" cried the men, eagerly.

"Why," answered Jack, grinning over his face, "you've sucked her dry as a bone. So now I propose that we obey the good old maxim, and let well alone."

Never did these honest tars hear a joke so thoroughly to their tastes.

That done, Harry Girdwood made a proposition that was far from being distasteful to the crew.

"With Captain Deering's permission," he said,

"I shall treat you all around to another go of grog."

"Hurrah!"

Harry went and asked permission, and what's more, he got it, too.

"As you like, Mr. Girdwood," said the skipper, "but neither you nor Mr. Harkaway must ask me again to-day, for I couldn't refuse you anything. You are made of the right stuff that England's sailors are built of, and you've done more between you towards saving the *Albatross* than any man aboard."

CHAPTER VIII.

A BANQUET AFLOAT—"TOASTS AND SENTIMENTS"—MR. NERO IN THE CHAIR—MR. FIGGINS RESPONDS—HIS ACCIDENT WITH NERO—PANTOMINE WITH A MAMMOTH PIE—UNLUCKY BOGEY!

ALL work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Our Jack was a real good one to work, as we all know.

He could play, too.

Moreover, he could make others play, and enjoy his fun.

The carpenter and his mate were sent down below to the hold, to caulk and patch and trim the soft-wooded old carcass in the most dangerous places, before the water could gain upon her again, and while this was going forward, Jack and his chum, Harry Girdwood, entertained a select party, by special permission of the skipper, in their own cabin.

Jack stood treat.

It was not a very grand affair, but the honest tars thought it a banquet fit for the gods.

Jack now treated them, by the steward's aid, to a stewed rabbit, and smoking hot potatoes, cooed in their jackets, some boiled pork, and pease pudding and other delicacies.

Some prime corned beef was on the festive board, too, and there was beer and grog to moisten it withal; so that the guests voted Jack a trump, and drank his health in bumpers around to an accompaniment of ringing cheers.

Now, among the company assembled to do honor to the occasion were the two young darkeys, Tinker and his "valet," Bogey, for much to Murray's and Chivey's disgust, they had by this time found out the ghostly trick played upon them by Jack's boy, Tinker, but to tell the truth, they were both glad that Tinker was not killed.

Our faithful old friend Nero was seated in the place of honor, dressed in a glittering naval uniform and a grand cocked hat.

Nero did not take it for a laughing matter, we can assure you, but sat at the head of the table as grave and dignified as though he had been the lord high admiral himself.

"My Lord Nero," said Jack, filling his glass, "I drink to the health of the skipper, Captain Deering."

"Captain Deering!" shouted the sailor guests.

"Stop a bit, gentlemen," said Mr. Figgins, getting on his legs; "let's have Captain Deering with due honors."

"Three times three?"

"Ay—ay."

"No," cried Nat Cringle, "with nine times nine at the very least. Take the time from me, please, and all together—hip—hip—hip, hurrah!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!"

You would scarcely have thought it possible that they could be on board a ship which one and all had condemned so recently.

A ship which would, beyond all doubt, have gone down with skipper and crew, but for their manful and untiring exertions.

"And now a little one in," said Nat Cringle, waving his hand.

They responded, too, with a will, one and all.

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us,
And so say all of us,
And so say all of us,
With a hip—hip, hurrah!"

And so forth, with a general chorus, *ad lib.*

Jack noticed that Nero had a knack of swinging his glass around, as he responded by gestures to the invitation to give a toast, matching all his master's movements with startling fidelity.

So he prepared.

"Charge your glasses," cried the orphan, in the pompous manner of a toast-master at a public banquet; "bumpers, gentlemen."

Jack had filled Nero's glass up, and then catching his eye, Jack waved his own glass, which was empty, around to the right, with a jerky air.

Nero followed suit.

Now Mr. Figgins was Nero's next-door neighbor, and the orphan received the contents of Nero's glass down his collar, and over his shirt front, and the glass, slipping from Nero's hand, struck the orphan in the face.

"Oh!"

"Halloo!"

"Murder!" yelled Mr. Figgins, springing up.

Nero grew frightened, and jumped on to the table at once, playing havoc with the dishes.

Mr. Figgins scrambled out of his seat, and made for the companion ladder.

But somehow or other he got the leg of a camp stool between his legs, and tripped up.

Nero jumped on his back in a jiffy, and the sailors laughed until the tears ran down their cheeks.

"Help!"

"Go it, Nero!"

"Murder! take the monster off."

"Keep it up, Nero! hi—hi!"

Nero wanted no inciting to mischief.

He was as playful as a kitten, and we verily believe that he understood fun as well as his friends and patrons generally.

"Help!" yelled Mr. Figgins; he'll murder me!"

He grew desperate in his struggling, and scrambling to his feet, he tripped Nero over.

One desperate plunge, and he reached the stairs.

Three at a time he went up them.

But poor Mr. Figgins' troubles were not yet at an end.

At the foot of the stairs he encountered Bogey, who was descending with a huge sea-pie swinging about in a mammoth dish, full of smoking hot gravy.

The orphan was shooting up head forward, and pressed down like an old goat butting an enemy, and he shot just under the sea-pie, and landed Bogey in the belly.

Bogey yelled.

"Oh, Golly!"

Down fell the dish, pie, orphan and all—a regular smoking avalanche—that rolled along the orphan's back, while the stinging hot gravy found a channel for itself between his shirt collar and his flesh.

The result was that Mr. Figgins' underclothing was literally saturated with the luscious juice, which was unpleasantly warm.

Down he went the whole length of the cabin floor, considerably faster even than he had gone up the stairs.

Down flopped Bogey, plump onto the orphan's stomach.

And up he got, "looking," as Nat Cringle said, "all ways for Sunday."

"Golly! what dis all mean?"

That was all that the astonished darkey could manage to iterate.

It had all been so sudden and unexpected.

"Oh!" groaned Mr. Figgins; "why did I leave my happy home on land to come to sea, and meet with such disasters—oh!"

The company literally yelled with delight.

Sailors are a rough lot, and there are few tars but relish practical joking.

Mr. Figgins, sitting up, with the gravy streaming down his hair and cheeks, presented such a ludicrous and deplorable figure, that it was no wonder that they laughed.

"Ha—ha—ha!"

"You may laugh," he said, ruefully, "but how would you like hot juice from a pie down your back? Just you answer me that."

"Capital!" ejaculated young Harkaway; "it must be nice."

"So sweet!" chimed in Harry Girdwood.

"But it was well done, Mr. Figgins," said Jack. "I had no idea you had got such spirits for a lark, sir."

"What!" cried the astounded Mr. Figgins. "A lark!"

"Yes. Why, you would have made an immense fortune, sir, as a harlequin in the pantomime."

"Give him a cheer."

They did, too.

"Do you mean to say," began the orphan at length, when he could succeed in obtaining a hearing, "that you think I did it for fun?"

"Of course you did," said Jack.

"But—but I assure you," began the orphan, "I—"

"Dat, sar," said Tinker, bowing at Mr. Figgins, "am awful gollopshus beastly fine lark ob yourn, sar."

"Massa Figgins come down,
And cracks his crown,
And Bogey come tumbling after."

Yah-yah-yah!"

Tinker's new version of Jack and Jill was highly applauded by one and all present.

"Dat all bery fine, Massa Figleaf," said Bogey, "but you spile dis chile's beauty."

"Bravo, Bogey!"

"And dis chile don't like it, sar, by golly, sar. Dis chile owe you one, Massa Figleaf, for dat—oh!"

"Hold your catawampus' jaw, you ignorant nigger," cried Tinker, shying a hot and soft potato at his follower's head, "and listen to your s'perior hossifer; Massa Figgins do it lubly bew'ful."

"Bravo for funny Figgins!"

"His health in a bumper around, messmates."

His health was then given with all due honors.

The poor orphan began to think that he was being made fun of.

* * * * *

"Mr. Harkaway."

"Halloo!"

"Wanted, sir."

"By whom?"

"The captain."

"I'm there," responded young Jack, springing up.

He flew up the cabin stairs, and was with Captain Deering in half a crack.

"Sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Harkaway," said the skipper. "I'm sorry to break in upon your festivity, but duty—"

"Must be obeyed, sir," responded young Jack.

"Quite right," said the captain. "Well, then, the wind, I find, is freshening again."

"Ha!"

"Pass the word to Nat Cringle, and old—what-d'ye-call-him?—to come up."

"Ay—ay, sir!"

"We must keep her away. Clear away the fore-topsail," he suddenly sang out.

Then watching for a smooth chance, he gave the order to hoist away.

The sail quickly set.

The helm was put up, and the lee main braces checked a foot or two, the object of this maneuver being to ease the wind out of the topsail.

CHAPTER IX.

FIGHTING WITH DEATH—A TOUGH STRUGGLE, AND BEATEN AFTER ALL—"LOOK TO YOUR LIFE RAFT, AS SMART AS YOU LIKE!"

It was a moment—a good long one, by the way, of considerable anxiety to all.

It was no joke what Captain Deering was after now.

The danger of the movement precious soon made itself apparent.

The sea caught the ship abeam, and as it did so, a tremendous wave was seen curling up astern, rushing on in pursuit of the *Albatross* as if to engulf it.

Roaring like a hungry monster for its helpless prey, it came on.

"Hold fast!" yelled the captain; "hold on for your lives, men, fore and aft."

Harry Girdwood and Jack, holding by each other, and with their disengaged hands grasping the nearest ropes they could clutch, were jerked so violently that their wrists were well-nigh dislocated, and it was marvelous indeed that they were not one and all swallowed up by the sea.

The only thing which saved the *Albatross* from instant destruction, was the fact of the bulwarks being washed away in pieces by the severity of the late gale.

The *Albatross* quivered from stem to stern!

However, as soon as the water found its way off the decks rapidly, the ship paid off quickly enough, and in the course of a few moments they were going along dead before the gale.

The force of the wind was felt much less, of course, than when they went head to it.

The sea, however, was very heavy.

Soon after this one monster wave came roaring after them astern like a mountain suddenly invested with life, and they saw that although there was not the same danger as in the previous visitation, there was a precious ugly shock to be anticipated.

It was a terrible shock this time.

Young Jack thought they were gone for a certainty.

Even old Nat Cringle avowed afterwards that he was in a thundering rage. Because why?

"He was going to get a lot more trouble to reach shore safe and sound than he had bargained for," not that his faith in his wonderful good luck deserted him even then.

The sheets were now hauled aft, and the fore-sail had been loosed, and the ship shot faster through the water.

The whole topsails were now set and matters looked more promising.

Once more they had, by the prompt and skillful seamanship of the skipper, escaped a deadly peril.

But there was no rest for the hard-worked crew.

"Pump ship!" sang out the first mate; "all hands pump ship!"

"That's a good thing," growled Nat Cringle, with an oath.

"You're right there, Nat," said a voice at his elbow.

Nat turned around.

"Ax pardon, Captain Deering," said the old salt, with a grin, "but I should like to be wrung out fust."

"Help keep this old sponge afloat, Nat Cringle," said the skipper, with a fierce air of determination, "and you shall get wrung out."

"I ain't afeard—"

"Quite right," said Captain Deering, with a smile, "but help keep the ship afloat, Nat, for the sake of the rest of them, and for—"

"For what?"

"To help pay off old scores with the owner, old Murray."

"I will, sir."

"And my friend, Captain Joe Robinson."

"Damme, that I will!" said Nat Cringle, heartily.

From that moment old Nat was all over the ship.

Lending one a hand here, and encouraging the half-drowned, shivering crew there by his cheery voice and valuable assistance.

* * * * *

"What do you think of matters now, Captain Deering?"

The speaker was our young hero, Jack Harkaway.

"It'll take us all our time to pull through unless we sight land within a reasonable time."

"Hah!"

It was enough to make the listener say "hah!" The ship labored and groaned ominously.

There was no possible doubt about the peril. But the danger was not immediate.

Good seamanship and incessant labor at the pumps kept her afloat.

But Captain Deering told those to whom he could safely entrust his views—that it was but a question of time.

"We may yet pull through," he said, "if we sight land soon, or if we fall in with assistance, and get towed into port."

Eagerly they scanned the horizon with their glasses.

All in vain.

Not the faintest speck in sight wherever they looked.

* * * * *

"Nat, captain wants you."

"Ay—ay, sir."

Nat Cringle ran up on deck to the skipper.

Captain Deering was looking anxiously ahead, and so engrossed with his observations that he did not hear the old tar's approach.

"Here I am, sir."

"What do you think now, Nat?"

"Well, I think—"

"Out with it, Nat; no palavering with me, you know."

"Well, then, I think as it's as nigh all up with the *Albatross* as it well can be."

The skipper sighed.

"Just my notion, Nat," he said; "not that I'm going to give in yet awhile; only let us be prepared."

"Ay—ay, sir."

"For the sake of the passengers, if not for ourselves, get the ship's carpenter, and see what you can get together between you towards fixing up a big life raft."

"Yes, sir."

"That with the boats will perhaps enable us to save all."

"Perhaps, sir."

"But, hang the thieves, they'll get the insurance money then," growled the skipper.

"Not sure yet, your honor," said Nat; "let's make ourselves sure first, and then have a turn at the rotten old hull again."

"How's the well?"

"Mortal bad."

"So I feared; so look to your raft as smart as you like."

CHAPTER X.

THE HARKAWAYS AT HOME—OLD JACK'S TROUBLE—THE VISIT FROM OVER THE SEA—AN UNLUCKY POSTMAN—YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY'S LAST WORDS.

We will now return for a short time to our old friends at home.

Matters went badly with the Harkaways.

When we say the Harkaways, we mean the family ashore, and not the son and heir of the house, whom we left afloat in a coffin ship.

Not a word of information could old Jack or his friends glean to give them a hope for their darling boy's safety.

"I have behaved like a fool, Dick, for allowing my bold boy to go in that coffin ship," he would say again and again to his faithful old friend and companion, Harvey.

And it was in vain that Dick Harvey essayed to console with and comfort him.

"You are too hard upon yourself, Jack," Dick returned, firmly. "You acted upon cool judgment, and if you have been deceived, the fault is certainly not yours."

Harkaway and his friend, Dick, had just finished their walk and cigar, when they were met at the door of the house by Mrs. Harkaway.

"Oh, Jack, look at this," she said, pointing to a paragraph in the newspaper she held.

"I'll come in and read it," said old Jack; "there's no urgent reason for reading it in the street, my dear, I suppose."

"It is not a matter for smiling at, Jack," she returned.

Impressed by her manner, Harkaway took the paper, and ran his eyes down the paragraph indicated.

It was headed thus:

"MISSING SHIPS."

"The *Albatross* has not been heard of since she sailed, on the 13th inst. This vessel has lately passed into the hands of Mr. Murray, whose bad fortune with his vessels has been a general theme for gossip of late in the shipping world. Strange rumors have been circulating about her. The owner, however, was fully insured."

The paper fell from old Jack's hand.

"Fully insured!" he gasped. "It is impossible!"

"It must be another vessel of the same name," said Harvey. "I know Murray told us that his vessels were so good he never insured."

"Look here, Jack," said Mrs. Harkaway, with a startling voice, "Murray has played us false, and I fear our poor boy is in sore peril. Oh, husband, where's our Jack?"

At this juncture a newsboy went past with a flaming placard in his hand.

"Fearful shipwreck and loss of life! All hands perished! Full and particular account—price—"

"Emily!"

Harkaway just turned around in time to catch her as she fell in a death-like swoon into his arms.

The strain on young Jack's mother's nerves was too great—she had fainted.

Some few days after the above events, a sailor came to the house to inquire for old Jack, and the latter, who was seated smoking a pipe with Harvey and Mr. Mole, gave orders to have the sailor admitted.

"You want me?" said old Jack, with a look of surprise.

"We picked up a bottle, yer honor," said the tar, "and inside we found a letter that was directed to you, so as soon as we got within sight of land, the captain sent me ashore with it. I made inquiries, and—"

"Where's the bottle?"

"Here."

From the cracked bottle he drew forth a letter, and handed it to Harkaway.

Mole looked at Dick, and Dick looked at Jack.

The latter had grown as pale as a sheet.

"Take something to drink, shipmate," said Harvey to the sailor; "there's brandy in that bottle; serve yourself."

Old Jack tore the letter open.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Mole, jumping up and clapping his hand over the letter; "just take a suck at the bottle first."

Old Jack took a stiff glass of brandy, and read.

"Ha!"

The paper fell from his hands, and he sank back with a groan of anguish.

"Jack!" cried poor Harvey, springing forward, and catching his old comrade in his arms,

"Jack, old friend, don't—don't take on so. What is it?"

But Harkaway could not answer.

Dick picked up the letter and read.

This was young Jack's letter, which he had committed to the waves in a time of deadly peril.

"MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:—The *Albatross* is what they call a coffin ship, and we are near the end of a precious hard fight for life. Forgive your poor Jack for being so pig-headed as to insist upon leaving you, and don't waste time in regretting and mourning after Harry and I; but seek out that old Murray, and that hypocritical Captain Robinson. Take one each, dad, you and Uncle Dick, and give them a thundering good larrupping, and when you have knocked them both into a good jelly, seek out some influential man in the Great Talking House, and get him to lift his voice to get this scandalous state of things reformed. Here we are, I cannot tell you how many of us passengers and crew, all sent afloat in a rotten old tub, painted and caulked up spruce, and puffed up to impose upon poor, ignorant fools. Now, we're not gone yet, but it looks unpleasantly like going, and so in case the law can't reach these dealers in human life, I leave them to you and to Uncle Dick. I hope to come back yet, and so does Harry, who sends his love to all, if we don't. Good-by, perhaps forever, dear father and mother.

"JACK."

Young Jack's letter was finished rather abruptly.

His father guessed that some calamity had overtaken the ship.

But it was not so.

The simple reason was that he and Harry had been summoned by an alarm to the deck, and fearing that they might not have another chance of posting their missive, it was placed in its bottle and dropped overboard.

* * * * *

When they had finished reading the letter, Mr. Mole was observed to grow very fidgety, red in the face.

He stumped up and down the room, thrusting his hands viciously into his pockets, and dragging them out again—and then cracking hisuckles with small reports, like Barcelonas going pop!

"I don't feel very well, Jack," he said, blowing his nose hard to disguise his emotion; "I—in fact I shall go for a walk—good-night, I mean, morning, I—I'm going to bed."

And with this somewhat confused valediction, Mr. Mole glided out of the room.

Jack stared at Dick—Dick stared at Jack.

"What's the matter with poor old Mole?" said Harvey.

Old Jack shook his head, and tapped his forehead significantly.

"Going. Yes!"

"So I think."

"I think that this dreadful news has done it for the poor fellow; he was so fond of Jack."

"I verily believe," said old Jack, wrestling with his grief, "I verily believe he would give every farthing he has in the world for those two wild boys to be here, and play off their cruel practical jokes at his expense."

"I am sure he would," said Dick.

The conversation flagged now for several minutes.

"Jack."

"Dick."

"The boys have left us a legacy to punish the villains Murray and Robinson."

"I'll tell you what," said Harkaway, "you shall take charge of old Murray, and I'll look after the welfare of jovial Captain Robinson."

"Agreed."

The two friends grasped hands in silence.

Thus the compact was sealed, and now woe betide jovial Captain Robinson and the ship-owner; whenever Harkaway or Dick Harvey should come across them.

"Jack," said Harvey, coolly, "you brought home from Australia with you, a short-handled stock-whip, with a thick leather thong?"

Old Jack started.

"You don't mean to say that you will use that the villain?"

"That's just exactly what I do mean," said Harvey.

"It shall be at your service, Dick."

So Harkaway went for the stock-whip.

If Mr. Murray could but have overheard the conversation, he would not have felt very easy in his mind.

Altogether matters looked ugly for him.

CHAPTER XI.

ARTFUL MOLE—MOLE THE EXECUTOR—HIS SINGULAR PRESENT FOR MR. MURRAY—A NOVEL DUEL—SHARP WORK—MR. MURRAY TASTES THE BITTERS OF HIS PROFESSION.

ISAAC MOLE went to his room and got out a pistol case.

He was engaged in loading his six-shooter when his wife crept into the room.

"Evins an' erf, Ikey!" she ejaculated, aghast, "what you doing that?"

Mr. Mole looked up a bit startled, but went on loading the revolver.

"Ask no questions, my dear," he answered, "but fetch me my walking stick."

Chloe, considerably flurried, hastened to obey her lord and master.

"Which walking stick?"

Mr. Mole paused to reflect.

It was a weighty matter, and demanded reflection, for he had a regular collection of walking canes, and it was necessary for his purpose to get a good pliable stick.

"Let it be the Malacca cane, with the gold top," he said.

She returned with it in a few moments.

"Where you goin' to, Ikey?" she demanded.

"That, my dear, concerns me alone," replied Mr. Mole. "Have the goodness for once in your life to repress your curiosity."

"Bress my 'art—" began the dark lady.

"Repress your curiosity," said Mr. Mole again, "for I haven't the remotest intention of telling you where I am going, or what for."

"But, Ikey—"

"Good-by for the present, my dear; I shall in all probability return for dinner."

"I say, now, Ikey—"

But he was gone.

And very soon was knocking at Mr. Murray's door.

"Mr. Murray!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take my card," said Mr. Mole, "and my compliments. I should like to have a word with him."

The maid servant went to her master, but shortly returned to say that Mr. Murray was very particularly engaged just then, and would accept an appointment for another time, if Mr. Mole could conveniently defer his business.

"That is precisely what I can't do," returned the old gentleman. "Will you go back to Mr. Murray, therefore, and tell him that I have something for him?"

Back went the girl, and returned in a few moments.

"Master's compliments, sir, and if you would send it in by me, he would take it as a favor."

Mr. Mole smiled.

An odd smile it was—yet still a smile—of a kind.

"I can't," he said, shaking his gold-headed Malacca cane nervously as he spoke. "I must hand it to Mr. Murray personally."

This carried the day.

Mr. Mole was ushered into the shipowner's presence forthwith.

Mr. Murray sat in an armchair before an office-table, which was covered with business books and papers.

He looked up and arose as Mr. Mole entered.

But Mr. Mole had his back turned. He was apparently engaged in shutting the door after the servant.

Mr. Murray did not observe that his visitor not only shut the door, but also locked it and pocketed the key.

"Good-morning, Mr. Mole," said the ship-owner; "you will excuse my refusal to see you at first, sir, but I have been ill for some considerable time, and the accumulation of business matters during that time, has driven me into a corner. I cannot get the arrears of work under at all."

"I shall not detain you long," returned Mr. Mole.

"Take a seat, sir."

Mr. Mole declined.

"What I have to do is best done standing."

"My servant informs me you have brought something for me," said the shipowner.

"Quite right."

"I am much beholden to you for the pains you have taken," said Mr. Murray.

Mr. Mole smiled.

"I have taken no pains, Mr. Murray," he answered; "it is you who will have to take the pains."

"What is it you have brought for me, may I ask?"

Mr. Mole held up the gold-headed Malacca.

"This."

"Excuse me, sir," said Mr. Murray, in his blandest tone, "but I don't quite see, even now—"

"Don't you?" said Mr. Mole, "then I will explain."

He drew a step nearer to the shipowner.

The latter shrank back instinctively.

"I am, as you are doubtless aware, the personal friend of Mr. Harkaway, and was tutor of his son, who has gone a voyage in the *Albatross*."

Mr. Murray winced.

"A fine ship, the *Albatross*, sir, A1 at Lloyd's, I believe."

"Yes, sir," returned Mr. Murray, in an unsteady voice.

"Of course," said Mr. Mole, in the same strain, "a gallant craft, and you are a happy man to possess such a vessel."

Mr. Murray could not stand this.

"You will excuse the question," he said, in a hard voice that had no ring in it, "but is this the object of your visit, sir?"

"Patience, Mr. Murray, patience, and you will learn."

"I must really—"

"No, you musn't!" interrupted Mole.

"Really, I—"

"Sir," quoth Mr. Mole, emphatically, and banging down the gold-headed Malacca cane between each word, on the shipowner's writing table, as if to give extra force to his speech, "I must tell my business in my own way. I say, then, that the *Albatross* is a noble craft—'noble craft' is the word I believe—so expressive—so romantic—so jolly Jack Tarish!—not a bit of a coffin ship!"

The shipowner started back.

"How dare you?" he began. "How dare you come here?"

"I came to bring you a present," said Mr. Mole, as cool as ever. "The noble craft is gone to the bottom—the gallant *Albatross* is lying in goodness knows how many fathoms, or exactly where, but from all report, not a long way from the Bay of Biscay."

Mr. Murray poured out a tumbler of water, and drank it off.

The interview grew warm and he was silent.

"My murdered boy—stand still and hear me out," added Mole, sternly, "or by the Lord Harry I'll make an example of you! My murdered boy, I say—the brave young Jack found time as the *Albatross* was going down, to write a letter—his will I may call it—telling all he knew, all he had learned on board since sailing, and as he was dropping into the watery grave to which you consigned him—"

"Sir?"

"He had learned, too late, alas! the exact nature of the trade which you pursue."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"You soon will."

Mr. Murray detected something in old Mole's voice which raised dire misgivings.

So he stretched out his hand to reach the bell-rope. But before he could accomplish his purpose, Mr. Mole hopped over and brought down the gold-headed Malacca a very smart rap on his knuckles.

"Oh!"

"Stand still."

Mr. Murray bridled up at this, and stepped forth.

While only menaced with scandal, he was filled with the greatest fear.

But now that the visitor grew more demonstrative yet, his sensations changed.

He was not to say physically a coward.

Moreover, Isaac Mole with his venerable appearance, and his two wooden legs, did not look a very formidable antagonist.

"If you don't instantly quit my house," he said, shaking his fist at the visitor, "I shall put you out of the window."

"Oh, you will?"

"I will."

Mole smiled.

"That is something better," he said, quietly; "up till now, you have shown that you are only possessed of the assassin's brutal instinct without having anything of such kind of courage as many of the worst murderers are known to possess."

"Scoundrel!"

"It is, at any rate," pursued Mr. Mole, who declined to be flurried under any pretext whatever, "it is at any rate refreshing to find you have a dash of something like a man in you, for Jack's present—this is old Jack's present," he added, giving the walking stick a parenthetical flourish; "it is an honest good cane, and I should not like to dirty it by contact with anything

so utterly degraded as I feared you would prove."

Mr. Murray grew livid.

"You—you—"

"Gently—gently," said Mr. Mole, "and I'll prove myself your best friend."

"Infamous old ruffian," cried Mr. Murray.

"Thank you, I'll prove it. Jack's legacy was to have been brought by his father; I wanted the office for two reasons; first, because I looked upon it as my privilege and my right; secondly, I want you to have half a chance—we are both old men, and in addition I am a cripple, as you see; now that equalizes matters, but if Mr. Harkaway had brought you his son's legacy, you would never have crossed that threshold alive!"

"So," said Mr. Murray, very white yet very determined, "assassination is your intention."

"No, punishment only," responded Mole.

"Oh!"

"Your villainy may not prove get-at-able by law—may not, I say—we have to try that yet. So for fear of a miscarriage of Justice, I am here to fulfil my dear, murdered boy's dying injunctions, and believe me, Mr. Murray," added the old gentleman with an odd mixture of satire and pathetic earnestness as he held out the cane, "the finest advocate in the world could never wheedle Jack's legacy into believing you are guiltless."

"You are mad!"

Mr. Mole turned up his wristband.

"We are wasting time."

"Leave the house!" exclaimed Mr. Murray, "or I'll have you dragged off to jail—"

He slipped to the door and turned the handle. It was fast.

"Locked!"

"As you see, my dear sir," responded Mole, quite pleasantly.

"Where's the key?"

"I have got it."

"Give it up, or—"

He made one stride up to Mole, who raised the cane.

Down it came, cutting the air with the most vicious music, and it left its mark across the shipowner's forehead and face.

Staggered for a moment, Mr. Murray made a rush at his assailant.

But the old gentleman, as cool as a cucumber still, whirled around upon one of his wooden legs, and seized Murray by the coat collar with the left hand, while with the right he banged away at his shoulders and back.

A dozen strokes were put in thus with such vigor and rapidity, that Mr. Murray was fain to wriggle himself free, and stagger across the room.

But Isaac Mole would not be denied.

He stumped after his man as fast as he could, and dropped in another or two wherever he could.

One smart cut across the face brought blood, and the shipowner, in the space of a minute, presented a very alarming aspect.

But Mr. Mole never paused to consider this. Murray was now getting very badly punished, and it was necessary to take a serious step.

He took it.

Feinting to dart to the door, he made a sudden rush at his writing table, and dragged open one of the drawers.

Mole was after him.

Only the table between them, and he saw what it was the shipowner was after.

He saw his hand upon a pistol, and so he whipped out his own revolver, and stretching over the table, he thrust it into Mr. Murray's face.

"Put down that pistol," he said, in low, earnest tones; "put it down, or I'll blow you to atoms."

Mr. Murray paused.

"Put it down, I say," replied Mole; "in three seconds you are a dead man else—hah!"

The ship owner cowered before that revolver.

Death was unpleasantly near, and few men can face it in such proximity with anything like calmness.

He dropped the pistol.

"Shut the drawer," said Mole, sternly. "If you use firearms, so shall I, and I have first shot. I provided against such an emergency as this."

"Assassin!" gasped the shipowner.

"Not I," returned Mole, "I am poor young Jack's executor, nothing more. Lock the drawer—throw over the key, do you hear?"

With a scowl of undying hate the shipowner complied reluctantly.

"Now I put by my pistol," said Mole, suiting the action to the word, "and we resume the thrashing."

He walked around the table after his man.

Mr. Murray waited a little.

Then he shot away.

Mole stumped after him.

Murray looked about him anxiously.

Then his glance resting upon the fire-place, he dodged a vicious cut which Mole aimed at him, and pounced upon the poker.

"Now, you old vagabond!" he said, or rather hissed, serpent fashion, "we are equal."

"Not quite," said Mole, "you have a bit of the advantage; no matter."

It was truly a most extraordinary sight.

Two men, well on in years, one with a pair of wooden legs, facing each other, armed with weapons of a more or less offensive description.

It looked awkward for Mole.

Very.

A poker against a walking-cane was no fair match.

Mole had his revolver to the good, it is true, but he would not use it.

Moreover, the shipowner felt assured that he had to do with a man of his word.

So his courage arose as he advanced to meet his wooden-legged adversary.

"You shall suffer now, you villainous ruffian!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed?" replied Mr. Mole, coolly.

The old gentleman kept a sharp look-out, and just as the shipowner drew back to deal him a desperate blow with the poker, Mr. Mole dropped in such a stinger on Murray's hand that the poker fell from his grasp, and the knuckles were cut open.

"Now for it."

Mole pounced upon his man, and showered down such a succession of blows, that Murray, stunned, confused, and pounded into a jelly, could not offer the feeblest resistance.

"Take that," cried the infuriated Mole, pounding away vigorously, "and that—and that, and I wish I had more wind left in me to—stay, here's one more for poor Harry Girdwood."

It was but one.

But such a one.

It seemed to lay the unhappy man's back bare.

"And now," said Isaac Mole, readjusting his disordered dress, "I'll go home to dinner."

"You'll suffer for this," groaned the shipowner.

"That's doubtful," returned Mole; "but there is no doubt in life that you will. Let me give you a word of advice. Keep clear of Mr. Harkaway; I have been merciful."

Murray groaned.

"But he will have no mercy on his son's destroyer. Keep yourself under lock and key. Do you hear? For once let John Harkaway or Richard Harvey get within arm's reach of you, and Heaven have mercy upon your miserable carcass. They are both young and vigorous men, not miserable old cripples, like yours obediently, Isaac Mole."

He fished out the key and opened the door.

"Don't you think to escape like that," moaned the shipowner, crawling to the bell.

"Nor you, either," returned Mole, turning round, "for we mean to have the very best law that is to be bought for money, to pepper you with, and we'll see if you haven't a part more vulnerable than your body. I mean your pocket."

He went out.

But as he closed the door, an idea occurred to him, and so he pushed open the door and popped in his head.

"Your accomplice, Captain Robinson, has turned king's evidence," he said.

This was not to say the downright truth, as you know.

Yet it served for a parting shot at Mr. Murray.

With which, Mr. Mole stumped back to dinner, happy in his mind and with a ravenous appetite.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. MURRAY'S MISFORTUNES—THE DOOR CHAIN—ANOTHER VISITOR FOILED—"LOOK TO IT, FOR I AM ON THE WATCH."

MR. MURRAY arose from the floor, bruised and bleeding.

Isaac Mole had piled it on pretty stiffly, and his arm fell heavily.

What was to be done?

He would seek assistance in the town.

It would be better for him to have a sturdy man-servant always upon the premises, so that if any of the Harkaway people should venture again to intrude upon him, he would be prepared to meet violence with violence.

Mr. Murray opened the door, and found himself face to face with a maid servant.

"Jane!"

"Yes," said the girl. "Are you ill again, sir?"

"No."

"I thought I heard you call out, sir."

Mr. Murray stammered out something confusedly, and grew very flushed in the face.

"No—no, Jane, I am well enough—that is, better—I am better, Jane, only pay attention to me, Jane."

"Yes, sir."

"If anyone comes to ask for me, don't admit them until I have given you orders."

"No, sir, I'll show them into the parlor, and say I'll see if you are visible or not, sir."

"No—no—no!" exclaimed the shipowner, eagerly, "you are wrong, Jane; that is precisely what you must not do, Jane."

"What then, sir?"

"Keep the chain up always."

"That's odd, sir."

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed Mr. Murray, testily, "and make no reflections upon the orders I give you. Keep the chain up."

"Lor', yes, sir!"

"So that you can always keep anybody out if you don't choose to admit them. Once for all, attend to that, for I don't choose to have a parcel of insolent beggars forcing their way in and insulting me in my own house."

"I shall know that wicked old sinner ag'in, sir," pursued Jane, mentally denouncing poor old Mole; "he's got nothing out of you, I suppose, so most likely he'll try on the seaman who was blown up, or the respectable mechanic who was whirled up on a saw mill, or, in fact, anything just to change his luck when he has his next turn; though, I'll bet you've rayther troubled him for one while, by the way you have given it to him this time, and—bless me!"

"What is it?" exclaimed Mr. Murray, with a start.

"You've tore your coat."

"Bah! what of that?"

"Nothing much, for you can get lots more; only it's a pity to waste good clothing over such an old villain as that was; that's all I think, sir, and—oh, Lor'!"

"What now?"

"You've got a bruise on your face, sir."

"Hold your tongue. Bear in mind what I have told you about that door chain."

Saying which, Mr. Murray turned back into the room, and slammed-to the door.

Mr. Murray surveyed himself in a glass.

Unpleasant reflection in two senses of the expression.

His face was bruised.

His coat was torn.

Moreover, his general appearance was disordered, as well it might be by the violence of the late encounter.

Mr. Murray renovated himself at once.

A touch with the comb, a change of garments, and a little vinous stimulant steadied his nerves a bit.

"The first thing will be to get around to Harris, and make him provide me with a good big fellow as a body-guard."

He was about to remove the chain and go forth, when a knock came at the door that made him jump.

A rat-tat-tat!

Mr. Murray started back as the tall figure of a man stood in the doorway.

He recognized him, too, immediately.

Harvey!

Yes, Dick Harvey was prompt to perform his part of his contract with old Jack.

Little did he suppose that he had been fore stalled.

How could he, or anyone, in fact, expect Isaac Mole to turn champion?

Dick had been engrossed in thought after knocking, or he would have perceived that the door was open.

He gave it a push, but the chain held it fast.

"Halloo!"

Dick thrust his head in, and looked around, to find himself face to face with the very man he had come to see."

"Mr. Murray."

"I'm out," exclaimed the shipowner; "I'm not well, and I can't see anybody."

"I'll not detain you long," said Dick, coaxingly.

"No—no; of course not."

"One word."

"What is it?"

"Let down the chain," said Dick.

"Impossible; it will not come undone."

This exasperated Dick, who lost his coolness.

"You lying old villain. Can't face me, I suppose?"

"Be off."

"You know what I come for."

"I do," retorted Murray; "and if you are not off, I will call a policeman and have you given in custody."

"I'll wait," said the artful Dick, "if you like to come out and make the charge."

"Not I," returned the shipowner; "I'll watch until a policeman passes, and give orders, that's what I'll do."

This would not suit Dick.

"Very well, Mr. Murray," he said, "very well. Since that is your notion, I can afford to wait my opportunity."

"Wait, then—wait," retorted the shipowner, "and let me caution you. I mean to invoke the law."

"You dare not," said Dick—"you dare not, and you know it. What you say is mere idle brag. Hark you, old man. If there is any justice in Providence, you will have to go afloat in a coffin ship yourself, and go down with it—experience yourself the horrors of drowning. When I hear that that has been your fate, I can perhaps forgive you. But while you are on dry land, look to your miserable self. I am on the watch."

* * * * *

"A telegram for you, sir," said the maid-servant, entering the shipowner's room.

"How you startled me," exclaimed Mr. Murray; "there, that'll do."

He tore open the telegram, and read it down.

His face turned ashy pale, and he gasped at the sight of that paper.

And yet the news it brought was the most welcome news that he could possibly have desired.

"Here is that which would gladden the hearts of those Harkaway people if I took it to them. But no; let them pine and languish in bitterness of spirit as I have done. That will teach them not to try on their villainy again. The assassins! No man ever yet affronted me with impunity. I'll keep it to myself, and I'll be off at once—ay, this very night, if I can get away from this port."

The news contained in that telegram would indeed have gladdened the Harkaways.

But before we give the reader the information upon this head, let us return to follow the fortunes of young Jack and his comrade Harry Girdwood.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATE OF THE "ALBATROSS"—FOUNDED IN FAIR WEATHER—"MAN THE BOATS"—THE ROLL CALL—THE OWNER'S SON AND HIS MAN—A POOR ORPHAN AND THE NEW BREAKFAST RELISH—OVERBOARD.

AND did the wretched old *Albatross* go down? No.

Thanks to the admirable seamanship of her commander and to the perseverance and undying energy of the crew, to which they were in no slight degree stimulated by the example of young Harkaway and Harry Girdwood, the *Albatross* weathered the gale.

It was a precious near squeak with her.

They ran for the Spanish coast, and once they had sighted land, they never ceased firing minute guns, and they hoisted signals of distress.

They fortunately attracted attention pretty soon, and assistance was promptly rendered.

The passengers and crew were for the most part landed in other boats, but Captain Deering stuck to his post, as did young Jack.

"Let me be here while there's one plank holding to another," he said; "not that I bear the worm-eaten old hull any love, only she mustn't go down without a very big effort. I'll see her in port—ay, in dock, and have her condemned properly. Let the owners pay the piper now. They have had their sport with her and a lot of brave fellows; the owners must pay for all the work they have given us, and all the fears and qualms that we have gone through—ay, the stoutest hearts on board."

We leave you to guess how this speech was received.

A ringing cheer of assent greeted it.

And the men within earshot gathered around the skipper, more eager than ever to save the *Albatross*.

They did it, too.

They worked her into a Spanish port, and then they had an official visit and examination made, the result of which was that she was condemned to be broken up.

All this was not without its effect upon young Murray, who insisted on being landed with his servant, and the ship proceeding on her journey.

But he protested in vain.

What authority had he in the matter?

It was all very well for him to say that he was the son of the owner, but he had shipped in an assumed name, and although it was pretty generally known who he was, Captain Deering professed to doubt his story *in toto*.

"You see," said the skipper, when the general inquiry was commenced before the British consul, "what he says may or may not be true, but we ain't bound to believe a young fellow who on his own showing has shipped under false colors."

Young Murray used violent language and threatened everybody concerned, until Captain Deering frightened this style of conduct out of him by a hint at putting him in irons.

"I'll tell you what, sir," said Chivey. "You had better telegraph over to the governor, and let him get to work, or it'll be all UP with the *Albatross*, in a brace of shakes."

"I will."

"Double quick, sir."

"Right, Chivey."

He telegraphed accordingly, and then he felt easier in his mind.

A letter was dispatched after his telegram, and this letter made his father much easier in his mind, knowing now his son was safe.

It lifted a weight of care off that unscrupulous man's mind.

It was more than he deserved, to be thus relieved, all things considered.

* * * * *

Now while the condemned *Albatross* lay off the harbor, the chief care of the captain and of those in authority was to remove the cargo, and they forgot all about the pumps.

The consequence of this may be imagined.

One night, when they had just turned in, young Jack, who was uncommonly sleepy, was aroused by Harry Girdwood with a very uncomfortable announcement.

"Hark—hark, Jack!"

"What?"

"The sound of rushing waters."

"Listen again."

Jack aroused himself with a bit of an effort, and sure enough he did catch the sound of rushing water.

"What does it mean?" demanded young Jack.

"Why, I'll tell you what," returned Harry. "The rushing sound of waters means the ship *Albatross* is going down to her grave!"

Young Jack sat bolt upright in his berth at this.

"I believe you're right, Harry. The coffin ship is doomed, but, thank the Lord, not in mid-ocean."

He glided out of the berth and slipped on his trousers in less than a minute.

"I'm off on deck, old boy; come along."

And suiting the action to the word, he flew up the companion ladder.

Harry Girdwood was not slow to follow on deck.

"Whose watch is it?" demanded Harry, as he appeared on deck.

"Mackenzie's, your honor," was the reply.

"Where is he?"

"Below."

"He's a fine officer to set an example."

The rushing sound of water became louder and louder.

"I'll rouse the skipper," said Jack.

"Right, Jack; be quick."

Young Jack soon had Captain Deering upon deck.

The skipper was a thorough sailor, and he took in the whole situation at a single glance.

"Who is the officer of the watch?" he demanded.

"Mr. Mackenzie, sir," replied a sailor.

"Where is he?"

"Below."

"Call him up."

"He ain't exactly fit to come, your honor," was the reply.

"What?"

"He's took too much spirit in his water, your honor."

The skipper frowned.

"I'll make an example of Mackenzie."

However, it was waste of time and of words to take any more notice about him just then.

"Pipe all hands."

Nat Cringle came up now and made his way to the side of Captain Deering with considerable alacrity.

"We haven't got many minutes, your honor," he said, "before the *Albatross* will swallow up every stick and scrap as she goes down."

"We must be smart, then," replied the captain.

"Ay—ay, sir."

"All hands to the boats."

The order was given.

Now the *Albatross* was well manned and excellently ordered—far better than such a rotten old hulk ever deserved to be; and everything was got about with the quiet discipline that one might expect to observe on board a man-of-war.

A boat was lowered and filled rapidly.

"Pull ashore," cried the captain, through his trumpet; "pull smart, and two of you bring the boat back at racing pace; we may want you."

"Ay—ay, sir."

The orders were given promptly enough.

Captain Deering told off the different persons to the boats, and all went very well until young Murray and his man, Chivey, who were anxiously awaiting the calling out of their names, caused some confusion by pressing forward.

For there were still a score or more of passengers on board.

"Stand back!" exclaimed the skipper, sternly, "or you shall remain till the last on board this sinking ship. Stand back, I say."

"But, captain—" began Herbert Murray.

"Utter a word, or do anything to impede us now," returned Captain Deering, "and I'll have you thrown overboard."

"Oh, what a horrid beast," said Chivey.

But he had spoken just a shade too loud, and it was heard by one of the horny-fisted tars, who gave the tiger what he called an admonisher, but what Chivey designated "a backhander on the smeller, that put my two peepers into mourning."

"Stand back—stand back," cried the second mate; "keep the gangway clear."

Mr. Figgins, who had been awaiting his turn with what patience he could muster, anxiously looked around at them for help.

He tried to quiet himself at such a critical moment, and put on an appearance of calm.

He nodded at the skipper, and smiled in the sickliest manner imaginable, and tried endless artifices to call the captain's attention.

But no use.

No one took any notice to him.

Captain Deering went steadily on, calling out the names one after the other, and got everything much more forward by his quiet, calm manner of going to work than any excitement or bustle could possibly have done.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Figgins, at length, "I am not very well, I thank you, captain—I am still here."

"Barclay!"

"Here."

"I am on deck, you see," murmured the orphan. "My name is Figgins, sir, and I am an orphan."

"Fenton!"

"Here."

"Figgins?" said the orphan, eagerly; "dear me, I thought you said Figgins, captain."

"Charlton!"

"Here."

"Frampton!"

"Here."

"Here!" said the orphan, in a faint voice, stepping forward. "I think you said Figgins that time."

"Stand back!" cried one of the sailors, dragging the orphan back by the collar.

"Dear me," exclaimed Figgins, in distress, "I made sure that the captain said Figgins."

"No, he didn't."

"Grant!"

"Here."

"Dear—dear—dear!" exclaimed the orphan, unable any longer to conceal his fears, "when ever will my turn come?"

"It won't come at all," returned the sailor, "unless you keep quiet."

"What do you mean by that?" faltered Figgins. "Pray, captain, let me get in the boat, I sha'n't take up much room, you know; I'm only a poor orphan."

"You'll go down to the bottom with the few as remain on board, I expect," remarked the sailor.

"Oh, Lor'—oh, Lor'! why was I born?" moaned Figgins. "Oh, it's dreadful to go to the bottom of the sea and never come up again."

"And you won't come up again unless it's in the form of shrimps," said Jack.

"Shrimps!" almost shrieked Mr. Figgins.

"Yes," said young Jack, who was bound to have his lark under any conditions whatever, "we shall probably hear of you, sir, under another form altogether. Shrimps are notoriously fond of dead bodies, particularly the body of an orphan."

A hollow groan greeted the awful speech.

"It would really be a novelty," pursued the remorseless Jack; "fancy the Figgins-flavored prawn."

"Or the orphan potted shrimp paste," observed the equally remorseless Harry Girdwood; "the new breakfast relish."

"Don't, I say."

"Don't what?"

"Don't talk so. I hate such fearful levity."

"Mr. Figgins," said the youthful Harkaway, in a deep, sonorous voice, "such a fate would immortalize the name of Figgins."

"And hand you down to posterity," added Harry Girdwood, in the same key, "as a benefactor to mankind and—"

"Breakfast tables, with the Figgins shrimp paste."

"Thank you very much," replied the orphan, "I have no desire for fame."

"Fame, sir," replied Harry, "fame is your lot, desire it or not—but hold tight, or you'll be overboard, sir."

"Bromley!" sang out the skipper.

"Here."

"French!"

"Here."

"Oh, Lor'!" cried Mr. Figgins; "I'm a gone man."

"Figgins!" sang out Captain Deering. "Figgins!"

The orphan tried to shriek out a reply, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he was dumbstruck.

"Figgins!"

The orphan's lips moved, but not a sound came.

"Confound him!" ejaculated the captain; "pass on, next one—Jefferies!"

"Here."

At this moment Figgins found his voice, and shrieked:

"Here I am, captain. Figgins, the orphan, is here!"

And he dashed forward, in a frenzy of fright at being passed over.

"Then why the devil don't you answer to your name?"

"Over with you," said Nat, who stood by.

"Dear—dear," said the orphan, "what a remarkably awkward ladder. Someone help me."

"Now, look sharp."

"I hope I sha'n't fall overboard—oh!"

The words had barely passed his lips, when he stumbled and fell.

Down he dropped, touching the boat and falling into the water.

But the men dragged him out.

"Mind the shrimps don't get at you, Figgins!" cried young Harkaway.

"Oh!" groaned the orphan, as the boat rowed away, "never was it my fate before to go down such a remarkably awkward flight of steps."

"But, damme!" cried one of the tars, "you didn't go down the steps. You preferred dropping into the water and sousing us all with the splash of your darned carcass."

"Don't be so impatient, my good man," said the orphan. "Consider, I was never meant for a sailor."

"Bah!"

"I don't like the sea, and I beg you—"

"There, stow your gab!"

"Dear me, how very violent," said the orphan. "Oh, I wish I was in smoky London again."

"Mr. Figgins!" shouted Harry Girdwood.

"Yes."

"Think of the new-flavored prawn."

The orphan was drenched to the skin, but in spite of his drowned-rat appearance, he could afford a little laugh now.

So he put on a sickly smile.

"Perhaps you don't know I'm only an orphan, my good men," he said to the rowers, plaintively, "and it's my belief that there's a special providence ready to rescue the poor orphan from a watery grave."

"Special fiddlesticks," returned a tar; "why, it was Dick Bean as lugged you out by the starn o' yer blessed slacks."

"Orfin be blowed!" ejaculated another demonstrative old salt; "jest swarm a lollipop into the orphan's gills to stop his jaw!"

"Dear—dear me," said the orphan, "what dreadful manners you men of the sea have. Oh, you make me shiver."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST ON THE MUSTER ROLL—THE SKIPPER'S HEADER—DAVY JONES' LOCKER.

CAPTAIN DEERING continued to call out the names steadily still, although every moment increased the peril of those on board.

"Jack, old fellow."

"What is it?"

"We shall have to swim for it, after all," said Harry.

"I don't think so."

"I feel sure of it," said Harry; "let us get on our cork jackets sharp."

"It is not far to swim," said Jack, "but there is no harm in taking precautions; there may be harm in neglecting them."

"Very well."

Down they went.

Now Jack, in donning his cork jacket, forgot to replace his locket—Emily's parting gift—and so he had to put it on over the jacket, a chance which, strangely enough, led to a singular mishap, as we shall presently see.

They were were on deck in three minutes.

"Binks," said the skipper.

"Binks," cried the mate.

"Where's Binks?"

No response.

"He has sneaked into one of the first boat-loads, perhaps," suggested someone.

"No, he ain't," returned Nat Cringle. "Binks is as drunk as an alderman down below, along o' Joe Sprunt and Mr. Mackenzie."

"The time grows short," said Captain Deering, uneasily; "they'll be drowned if we aren't sharp."

"Girdwood," sang out Captain Deering.

"Here."

"Drewitt."

"Here."

"Will no one go and warn these men?" said young Jack. "I'm not going to leave the ship, and see them dragged down with it without an effort to save them."

"Harkaway," called out Captain Deering.

No reply.

"Harkaway."

"Harkaway! Where's Harkaway gone to?"

"Below."

"Call him," cried the captain, anxiously.

"Harkaway!" yelled honest Nat Cringle, who had taken a wondrous fancy to young Jack; "for the Lord's sake come up."

"Cringle."

"Here, sir."

"Over with you."

"And you, captain?"

"I remain here till you are all off."

"I'll just see after Master Harkaway, sir."

"Nat Cringle," replied the skipper, sternly, "you must obey orders, or you'll be answerable for the lives of these men. Over with you."

Two men remained; one of the mates and a sailor.

They forced Nat Cringle over the side.

But the honest old tar never ceased yelling for Jack Harkaway.

The cries resounding in all directions were deafening.

In the boat just pushed off the voice of Harry Girdwood could be heard above all, calling to his rash young comrade in wild despair.

"Now, Briggit."

"Here, yer honor."

"Over with you."

"And you, captain?"

"Confound you!" roared the captain, losing his temper now that he had saved his crew by his coolness and presence of mind, "over with you."

"After you, yer honor."

"D—n you for a mutinous thief. She's rocking under our feet, I tell you. Over with you; the ship is going down fast."

The *Albatross* was giving her final kick.

"Pull clear of the ship—pull hard—pull—pull, I say. Lay down to it, or you'll be sucked down."

The men gave way and pulled with resolution, with the instinct of discipline strong upon them rather than fear. But for the word of command, which the skipper cried out so clearly, they would have stuck there, heedless of the danger of being drawn down in the vortex, so that they could have been near their bold, lion-hearted skipper.

Captain Deering's task of peril was not yet over.

Seeing the boat clear of danger now, the captain threw off his top coat and ran along the deck to yell down below after Jack.

"Harkaway!" he cried. "Harkaway. Come up; the last boat's gone. Ha! too late!"

He cast off what clothing he could, and bounding up to a point of vantage, he took a long, vigorous dive just as the treacherous old *Albatross* settled and went down.

CHAPTER XV.

DARE DEVIL JACK—IN THE DEEP TROUGH OF THE SEA—THE CORK JACKET PLAYS ITS PART WELL—MR. TINKER AND HIS VALET "GO TO LARN UP ALL PERTICKLARS."

"WHERE is Jack?" cried Harry Girdwood. "Pull back, I say. Don't desert him!"

"There goes the skipper," cried Nat Cringle. "Hurrah!"

This was at the moment that Deering took his desperate header.

The men caught up the cheer one and all.

"Pull back—pull back!" said Harry Girdwood, despairingly. "Don't let us desert like curs the bravest, boldest heart that ever beat in a sailor's breast."

"Don't listen to him, men; Harkaway had his chance; let him drown, he's not of any use to us. Pull away, or we shall all be drawn under the sinking ship," said Murray.

"Hold your mag," said Harry, dropping his hand heavily upon the speaker's head. "Jack is worth a thousand of your wretched sort."

"Why should we endanger all for the sake of one?" cried Murray. "He chose to go and play the fool after those drunken men."

"Silence, you heartless young swab," exclaimed Nat Cringle, indignantly. "Half a word more to that tune, and I'll drop you overboard."

"There's some one climbing the rigging, I think," said one of the sailors. "Look there."

"It's young Harkaway."

"No, no, it is no Jack," said Harry Girdwood, almost in tears. "Poor Jack has gone down."

Alas! there was no hope for him now.

Meanwhile, Captain Deering was seen breasting the surface of the water, and pushing along with a vigorous stroke.

* * * * *

When young Jack got down below, he found two of the crew hopelessly, helplessly drunk, and beside them the Scotch mate, Mackenzie, in a scarce better condition.

"This is a hopeless case," exclaimed young Jack.

Yet he had a turn at them.

The mate was not quite so far gone as the two unfortunate men to whom he had set so bad an example.

"Mackenzie," cried Jack, shaking him.

"Eh? Whose watch?" muttered the mate, thickly.

"The ship's settling, I tell you," cried Jack. "Wake up."

"Ugh!" grunted Mackenzie; "it's not my watch, I tell ye. I ken verra weel when—"

And then he laid back and snored again.

Jack cried out in despair:

"The fool! He's lost! Hah! what's this here? The very thing."

A bucket of water stood just handy, so Jack whipped it up and dashed it over the mate.

"Darn yer impudence!" cried Sandy, waking up and making a grab at young Jack.

Just then the voice of the skipper was heard calling him wildly to come up.

The last moment had come.

"Let go, Mackenzie," cried Jack, struggling with desperation.

But the mate was a gaunt, strong fellow, and young Jack stood but a very poor chance in a tussle with him.

"I'll crop yer ears for ye, ye whelp of Satan!" hiccupped the Scotch mate.

"Too late, too late," cried the skipper up aloft. "Jack, Jack, where are you?"

The words sounded like a death-knell in young Jack's ear.

He fought fiercely with the drunken mate, and, wriggling himself half out of his clutches, sent him staggering back, but before Jack could get fairly off, Mackenzie was after him again, and grabbed at him.

He was a little short, but he chanced to get hold of the locket and chain—little Emily's parting gift—and held Jack momentarily a prisoner, but holding on to the hand-rail with the energy of despair, our hero kicked out desperately, and sent the mate reeling back.

Up he flew on deck.

The captain had already taken his leap for life.

The ship sank fast.

Jack's peril was deadly.

He looked about him.

His only chance was the rigging.

Young Jack climbed like Nero himself, so up he went hand over hand into the shrouds, as the ill-starred *Albatross* quickened her pace downwards.

Even now he did not turn sick or faint-hearted, as may be guessed by the following characteristic speech:

"That beast Mackenzie has grabbed Em's locket."

He reached the crosstrees, and gave a sharp look around him as he calculated his chances.

The whirlpool which the sinking of the huge carcass caused, was of alarming dimensions.

Spars, chips and coops, and sundry floating things which had been thrown overboard at the last moment, were drawn into the vortex already.

Aud this told young Harkaway his danger.

It was not difficult to see it.

"Well, said young Jack, resolutely, "it is my only chance for life. Here goes."

He set his teeth, poised himself for a moment upon the crosstree, then swinging back, he plunged boldly forward in the air.

Heaven!

What an eternity it seemed to our brave young hero, that brief passage through the air!

Down, down he went, seemingly to the ocean's bed.

Then, having regained—well, scarcely his presence of mind, but rather having strong instincts of self-preservation—he struck upward, and with half a dozen vigorous strokes he reached the surface—reached air and light.

The cork jacket now played its part well.

Where would young Harkaway have been else?

Probably at the bottom of the sea.

And there would have been an end to the adventures of young Jack Harkaway and his boy Tinker at once.

Brave young Jack did not mean to cry a go yet.

He stuck to it manfully, and as he breasted the surface of the water, a singular phenomenon manifested itself.

He had not felt the influence of the sinking ship while under, yet now that he was on the surface, and on the limit of the whirlpool's eddies, he felt the strength of its influence.

It was desperate work now.

He set his teeth, and plunged on.

Yet he felt that in spite of everything, he made little or no progress.

As fast as he got ahead, the fierce strength of the whirlpool drew him back.

It was indeed well for him that he had not reached the surface earlier.

He felt this instinctively, and taking a long, deep draught of air, he ducked his head, and plunged below the surface once more.

A dozen vigorous strokes, and he shot up again.

Then he was safe.

"Now for a good, long, steady swim, Jack, old boy," he cried to himself.

Then turning over on his back, he took it easy and looked about him.

"That was a narrow squeak," he said. "But I wish that that beast of a Mackenzie had not prigged my locket."

He was a good swimmer, but there came a time when even he was tired out.

He turned over and had a swim.

The shore looked a desperate way off.

"I shall never be able to reach shore all that way off," he said. "But 'never say die' is my motto, so here goes."

Young Jack caught sight of a boat presently, and he hailed it.

"Halloo—ho! Help—ho—ho!"

The effort took all his strength, and he gasped again.

Thanks to his cork jacket, he did not go under, but by now he was powerless to help himself.

But on board this boat there were two persons who had heard the cry.

Moreover, both of them had recognized the voice.

"Oh, golly, dat's Massa Jack," said one of the persons. "I'se gwine to larn up all perticklers."

And with no more ado, the speaker, who was a nigger, tumbled over into the water.

The other person was likewise a darkey.

"You may consider dis infant dere, Massa Tinker," said the other person, peeling hastily.

He dived over too.

These two darkeys, who were, need we say?—Tinker, and that gentleman's valet and major-domo, Bogey, were quite as much at home in the water as they were upon land, and they thought no more of trusting their ebony carcasses to the waves than we should think of eating our dinner.

They played up all kinds of pranks in the water, and could keep under, seemingly, any length of time.

It was a comical race.

Every now and again, one or the other would bob up and squint at his fellow countryman.

Then they would shoot along again.

"Look, Bogey," cried Tinker. "Yah—yah; dere he am, dis child soon hab him."

At length they got within range of poor young Jack.

He was floating, thanks to the corks, but insensible.

When they were within range, they dived simultaneously, and then shooting upwards, came to the surface at the self-same moment, one on either side of young Jack.

"Oh, golly, Bogey!" cried Tinker; "dis infant am awful glad he got hold of good Massa Jack."

And so the two niggers, master and valet, towed young Jack up to the side of the boat, and with great difficulty they got him into it.

CHAPTER XVI.

BOGEY IS COMMISSIONED TO RUB MASSA JACK'S LITTLE TUMMY.

"Be golly, him look pale!"

"Ole your dressed tongue, nigger!" said Tinker, authoritatively; "an' rub him little tummy."

"Yes, massa."

"Poor fellar!" said Tinker, sadly; "him bery uncommon poorly."

"Dis chile make him tummy warm," said Bogey, "an' den he'll get all right, massa."

So saying, he rubbed away now more vigorously than ever.

The efforts of the two faithful darkeys soon told, for Jack opened his eyes.

"Tinker," said he, with a sigh.

"Yes, sar, dat am dis good-looking child."

"Where am I?"

"Hyar, sar, 'long wid Tinker and Bogey."

"Where's here?"

"In de boat, sar."

"I remember now, Tinker."

"What you remember, sar?"

"That beast of a Mackenzie prigged my locket."

Tinker looked puzzled.

Then shooting an inquisitive glance at his master, he made up his mind.

The trials and dangers had turned "him bressed head."

"Mackenzie, sar," he said, seemingly indignant; "did you say Mackenzie, sar?"

"Yes."

"Well, sar, punch him head."

"I mean to, if he's afloat," returned young Jack; "but I fear he's gone down."

This being off his mind, young Jack lapsed into a sort of semi-somnolency.

"Bogey."

"Yes, massa."

"Rub him tummy, you ugly waggibone."

"Yos, massa."

"Keep a-rubbin' ob him till he get all ober warm like."

"Yes, massa."

And he went to work at a rare rate, too.

Well, the result of this was that when they got ashore, young Jack had so far recovered that he was really very little the worse for his leap, and his dive, and his protracted immersion.

The boat grounded just about three or four minutes before another boat came on shore.

And in this boat was Harry Girdwood, just returned in bitter despair at what he thought Jack's death.

He looked so pale and haggard that one could scarcely believe it to be the result of grief alone.

Young Jack ran to greet him.

"Why, Harry, old man, what is the matter?"

Harry Girdwood looked puzzled.

"Jack."

"Yes."

"Is it you?"

"Why, yes, unless I am very much mistaken. I don't think I am anyone else than young Jack Harkaway."

"Why, Jack, my dear old boy, how did you get here?"

"Partly by swimming, partly by floating, and partly in the boat, while Bogey rubbed my little tummy to bring me around."

While Jack was urging on his wild career shorewards, the other boat in which Harry Girdwood was drafted off, had been hanging about the wreck to pick up anyone who might have been overboard and had the good luck to get clear of the vessel.

But they were singularly unfortunate.

A third boat had picked the skipper up, while they remained even ignorant of his fate, as they had been until now of young Jack Harkaway's.

* * * * *

"What, young Harkaway!" cried out a manly

voice; "give us your grapping iron, Master Jack, for demme, Nat Cringle longs to touch your flesh."

"With all my heart, Nat Cringle," cried young Jack; "give us a grasp."

His example was followed by all around.

And young Jack had his hand well-nigh wrung off.

"I had all my work to do," said young Jack, "to get free of that drunken old Mackenzie."

And thereupon he related all that had taken place on board during his vain endeavor to rescue the mate from the wreck.

"I only hope as he's saved," said Nat Cringle, "for if I meet him ashore, I'll make small biscuit of him in the turning of a marlin-spike."

That Nat's resolve was highly approved of was duly attested by the salvos of cheers from the sailors which greeted his speech.

"Well," cried Jack, "I hope we shall meet him, for confound the brute, he's prigged a locket my little sweetheart gave me at parting on shore."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ORPHAN'S INFIRMITIES—JACK GIVES HIM A LESSON IN SPANISH.

"HERE comes the skipper."

"Hurrah, here he comes."

Captain Deering saw Jack, and he came running up to the spot to greet him.

"Egad, Master Harkaway, you've had a narrow escape this time," he said.

"And you too, sir."

"Yes, Harkaway," replied the skipper; "a closer shave than I should care for every day. I might not always come off, d'ye see?"

Just then a sick-looking gentleman came up with his head tied up in a white handkerchief.

"Oh, Captaid Deerig," said he, "I codgratulate you, indeed I do. After what young Harkaway told me of those dasty shrimps, I feared you had gode to the bottob."

"So I had, Mr. Figgins," returned the skipper, with a grin, "and I came to the top again as quick as convenient."

"It was dearly all over with be, too, captaid."

"Oh, no," returned the captain, "you were soon picked out, and you're not much the worse for a sousing. Salt water doesn't hurt any man."

The orphan gave a grunt and a groan of impatience at this.

"Doesn't it deither? Why, I've got a code id by dose that'll last be for a fortnight."

The doleful expression of the orphan's face made the skipper laugh outright.

"Not so bad as that, Mr. Figgins, I hope."

"Isd't it? but I know it is. I wish somebody else had got my code in his dose," returned the orphan.

"You may think yourself very fortunate there were no shrimps here to seize upon you, when you tumbled in the water; but you can easily get over your cold, Mr. Figgins," said young Jack.

"Oh, Mr. Jack."

"How do you feel, Mr. Figgins?"

"I'm very bad iddeed, Bister Jack; I wish some ki'd persod would take care of be, for I am odly ad orphad."

"Oh, we'll take care of you, but you must get over your cold first. Take a tubful of gruel with a candle in it, sir."

"A what?"

"A candle; I don't mean to eat the candle altogether."

"I should thi'k dot."

"You only have to drop the candle in the gruel, while it's nice and hot, to melt it a little, and rub yourself all over with it."

"Get alo'g, you're chaffig. I wish you good-vedig, Baster John."

"I'm only Master John on Sundays, Mr. Figgins—Jack on week days, please."

"Jokid apart," said the orphan, "gruel isd't a bad thig for a code, odly I cad't thig how I shall get od with these Spadiards."

"Easy enough."

"What's the Spadish for gruel, Jack?"

"Bilstickas sauce," responded young Jack, promptly.

"Dear be. Ad—ad—jokid apart, a caddle isd't half a bad thig for the dose."

"You're right."

"What's the Spadish for caddle, cub dow?"

"Fardendippa," answered young Jack.

"Fardeddippa."

"Yes."

"What a singular lagwidge Spadish is, Baster Jack."

"Very. Remember that Spanish people are very proud and ceremonious."

"All right, I'll be cerebodious with theb. I shall get to the hotel and off to bed; good-dight."

"Well, good night, Mr. Figgins, and don't forget your Spanish, for remember you are a young and tender orphan, with no one to look after you, and the Spanish people like to use their knives on unprotected English orphans."

"True—true. Oh, I wish I was at hobe."

And as he went up the beach, he kept repeating it to himself:

"Gruel, bilstickas sauce. Caddle, fardeddippa, good for the dose and a code."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THEIR TRICKS AGAIN—THE COCKNEY WAITER—A SURPRISE—POOR ORPHAN FIGGINS.

"JACK, what do you think of this place?"

"Well, Harry, not half bad diggins up to the present. There is only one drawback as far as I can find out as yet."

"What is it?"

"The Carlists."

"Those rascals are never here," exclaimed Harry.

"Yes, they are; rather strong, too."

"Are these people all Carlists, then?"

"To a man."

"Pheugh! I say, Jack, old boy, that's rather hot."

"Oh, there is nothing much to fear until the other scoundrels come and bombard the town."

"The deuce they will. Why, Jack, we have run ourselves into some danger."

"Very great danger, from what I hear."

"Well, this is a precious rum go," said Harry Girdwood. "However," he added, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "we can stand to it, and it won't prevent us making the most of Mr. Figgins' terror when we pile it on him."

"Oh, our poor orphan will be in for a good thing," said Jack, chuckling aloud at the bare anticipation; "but it must be very carefully done."

"Very."

"I'll work up to it with tales of the Carlists' atrocities—make out that they're everything that's awful—cannibals included."

Poor Figgins!

Hapless orphan!

He was destined to suffer now for the amusement of our two young scapergaces.

* * * * *

They went up to have a look at Mr. Figgins, and they found him in his room in bed, struggling in an overwhelming sea of difficulties.

"You feel more yourself now, Mr. Figgins," said Harry Girdwood, "now that you have on your nightcap."

"I do certaintly feel easier."

"You would, of course," said Jack, eagerly. "And did you try the gruel and the candle?"

"I could't."

"Why not?"

"Could't bake eb udderstad."

"We'll manage that for you," said Harry Girdwood, tipping Jack the wink.

"Of course, anything to oblige Mr. Figgins."

"Thak you—oh, thak you, young gedtlemened," responded the grateful sufferer; "but, oh! why did I ever cobe to sea? I was never inted'ed for a sailor. Oh, dear!"

"Poor thing! Shall I ring the bell?" said Jack.

"Oh, I wish I could hear a Loddod buffin bell; that would be busic to be."

Harry rang, and up came a spruce young waiter.

"Waiter," said Jack, in his most Spanish air.

"Senor."

"Candelozza por el nosa del' olda-cockawaxa."

The waiter looked considerably puzzled.

"Candelozza, senor excellenza?"

"Si," said young Jack; "don't you understand? Candelozza—fareendippa per el nosa dell' ancianta-buffa."

"Por taller sua snuffboxa," explained Harry Girdwood, gesticulating wildly.

The waiter looked on aghast.

"He does't cobrehed," exclaimed the invalid, in despair; "waiter."

"Senor."

Mr. Figgins sat bolt upright and pantomimed violently at the waiter.

"Caddle—udderstad? Caddle, tallow-wick, light, fat to rub od by dose, uddelstad?"

"Oh!"

That was all the waiter could say in his wonder.

"Now he understands," said Jack, winking at Harry.

"Mr. Figgins' Spanish is better than ours."

"Oh, dear, no, sir," responded the waiter, with a mirthful twinkle in his eye, and in purest Whitechapel English; "about the same, sir. Didn't know you was English, sir. Old gent wants a taller candle to rub on his nozzle. I see, sir. I'd no notion that you was a-getting at me, sir! I'm from the east of London, bred and born there."

Off he ran, leaving Master Jack and his companion rather more astonished than the waiter himself had previously appeared.

* * * * *

"Well," exclaimed Harry Girdwood, "that has rather taken it out of us."

"Rather. Who would have thought of seeing a London waiter here?"

"Let us go and find the cockney waiter, and see what we can do with him."

"Come along."

They found that cockney waiter and they bribed him.

And they plotted in the most shameful manner against the orphan Figgins' future peace of mind.

Of this more anon.

For the present we must limit ourselves to saying that some unhappy moments were in store for the poor gentleman with the cold in his head.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STROLL IN AN ORANGE GROVE—THE VINE-YARD—THE HARKAWAY BLOOD IS UP AGAIN—AN AWKWARD MESS.

"LET'S go and have a look about the town," said Jack.

"With all my heart," responded Harry Girdwood, "but let us get some information first of the cockney waiter."

Trimmer, the cockney waiter, had lived there for years, and knew everything about everything and everybody.

He was well acquainted with the country around, and he directed them to the most interesting places to visit.

"If you turn to the left when you get outside," said he, "you will come to the orange grove—the best walk in this part—and beyond that you get to the vineyards, and they are downright awful stunning."

"You are so emphatic and forcible," said young Jack, "that I shall be off at once."

"All right, sir; but keep clear of them Carlist fellows; they're as proud as Lucifer, and they haven't a stiver to spend; they live upon olives and garlic, and there ain't, so to speak, a clean shirt in the army."

"I'll be careful."

"That's right."

"And if any of them Carlist fellows speak to you, only bow and walk on."

"We will."

* * * * *

It would have been well if they had followed out the injunctions of the Cockney waiter literally.

But out of sight, out of mind.

They were no sooner in the orange grove than they forgot all about the Carlists and the waiter, and, in fact, about anything for the time being, but the delicious perfume of the enchanting scene through which they were passing.

"What a Paradise, Jack!" exclaimed Harry.

"Elysium," was Jack's rapturous reply.

"It smells like all the perfumers of Bond street boiled down."

"Delicious!"

"What a thousand pities that our foggy old climate won't grow such a treat as this."

"It is. But then our foggy old climate doesn't grow Carlists and garlic and dirt, and brag and lie so prolifically as this beautiful place."

"That's true, old wet-blanket," said Jack.

"Old England isn't half a bad place, after all, in spite of its fogs and rains and coughs, colds, catarrhs, rheumatism, and the rest of it."

"Ugh!" growled Harry, "couldn't you rake up a few more reproaches for the land of your birth?"

Young Jack's response was brief and expressive:

"Pickles!"

Then, after a moment, he said:

"Let's change the subject."

"When will the divers begin their operations?"

"To-morrow, if what Captain Deering says is true; the vessel is already on the spot, you know."

"But I am told that only one of the divers has come over up to the present."

"What of that?"

"A great deal."

"Why?"

"How can he begin alone?"

"Easily enough."

"It must be precious dangerous, I should say."

"Why more dangerous for one than for several?"

"Why, if two are together and one is not well—if any accident happens, the other could give the signal to haul up."

"True, there must be great danger attendant upon deep sea diving."

They walked on for some distance in silence.

"Harry."

"Yes."

"I'm going to confide in you, old man, only I want you first to make me a promise."

"I will."

"You won't laugh?"

"I'll look as serious as a whole bench of judges."

"Well, the fact is, that in the under steward's cabin of the *Albatross* is something which I wouldn't lose for a hundred pounds—no, nor for a good many hundreds."

Harry stared.

"What is it?"

"You're going to grin."

"Not I."

"Well, it is a—now don't get on that beastly guffaw, Harry. Em gave me a locket before I left, with a lock of her hair in it—bless her! and the drunken brute Mackenzie make a grab at me as I was escaping up the companion ladder, and tore it off my neck."

"What then?"

"I want it."

"You can't get it."

"I'll go after it."

"Bosh! Do you think you would please Emily by risking your life on such a job?"

"No, but I don't mean to go home without it."

Harry Girdwood looked anxious at this.

He knew too well the determination of the Harkaways one and all, and he knew that all the arguments he could use would not turn young Jack from his purpose.

So he tried to effect a compromise.

"You have only to try and tip the diver who's there already."

"I'll try it."

* * * * *

They had now emerged from the orange grove.

Beyond, they came to an enclosed ground, with a high wall lining the side of the path on their right.

They had to pick their way along here, for the road was below the level of the path, and a recent heavy rain and bad drainage combined had left the road in a sad mess.

They picked their way along in single file, keeping up close to the wall.

In this way they progressed for some distance, when a man was seen to turn a corner sharply and advance towards them.

Now this man could very well have retreated to the place from whence he had emerged and allowed them to pass.

But he was a haughty, ill-natured fellow, and he made straight up to the two lads with a sternly defiant air, and waited for them to move aside for him.

So they came to a full stop.

The stranger was a young, tall, dark man, handsome enough to look at, and seemingly a military officer.

He paused a moment, looking down upon young Jack, who stared back coolly enough, for it wanted a very big man indeed to abash a Harkaway.

"Maledicion! give way, boy!" ejaculated the Spaniard, furiously.

And lunging suddenly forward, he seized hold of Jack and whirled him around off the path into the mud, ankle deep.

Now this was not the sort of thing that young Jack could relish, or he would not have been the son of his father.

Before you could say Jack Robinson, or, indeed, give utterance to an infinitely more brief exclamation, he sprang forward and seized the Spaniard by the leg, and gave it a mighty tug.

The effort was so sudden that the officer could not save himself, and he went sprawling in the mud.

The Spaniard made a rare noise and bluster, and used a lot of very alarming expressions, or

rather expressions which ought to have frightened the very soul out of the two boys if they had understood a word of them.

But beyond a good many *Carambas*, *Carajos* and *Malediciones*, they did not understand much.

He shook some of the mud from his garments and made a rush at Jack, but the latter dodged the don and met him with a good old English one, straight from the shoulder.

"I'll have your heart's blood for that!" cried the Spaniard, taking out a card and throwing it at Jack.

Now the latter understood the action, although he could make nothing of the words, and this was a species of invitation which one of his hot-blooded race could refuse.

"It's a challenge," exclaimed Harry, in alarm.

Young Jack produced his card and wrote upon it the name of the hotel at which they were staying.

"What are you about?" cried Harry Girdwood. "I'm not going to have anything of this kind; you shall not meet this man in combat."

"You can't help it any more than I can," returned Jack, coolly. "At your service, señor, when you please," he added, with a bow to the Spaniard.

The latter bowed in return, and curling his mustache fiercely, he strode away, shaking his fist in the air.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHALLENGE—A PROFESSIONAL DUELLIST—TRICKS OF FENCE—JACK AND HIS MAITRE D'ARMES.

"WELL, Jack, this is bad. What would your poor father say if he knew about it?" said Harry Girdwood, utterly dismayed; "it's a dreadful job."

"A rum go, isn't it?"

"A rum go," cried his companion. "Oh, Jack—Jack, whatever will you do?"

Jack stared.

"Do? What would you do?"

"It is not right you should fight this Carlist brute. I should bolt."

"Bolt," echoed Jack. "Yes, I think I see myself; why, Harry, you old fibber, to say you'd bolt. Why, you would have wanted to fight it out then and there."

"It is madness, Jack. I tell you that this meeting must not take place."

"Now don't be obstinate, Harry," said Jack, angrily. "What, would you have me turn coward before this bully? No, Harry—no wretched Spaniard shall have the chance of saying that he frightened young Jack Harkaway."

This closed the conversation.

They walked back to the hotel in utter silence. "Let us look at his card," said Harry Girdwood.

This was the first word spoken between them. Jack handed over the card.

"Don Gil Perez."

"He's a pretty don," said Harry.

Young Jack turned to his friend and silently held out his hand.

"Come—come, Harry, old man," he said, "we must not have any bad feelings over this job."

Harry returned his grip with heartiness.

"Ill-feeling, Jack!" said he, with deep emotion. "Heaven forbid that anything should make ill-feeling between you and I."

The Cockney waiter came in just then with a card on a salver.

"A gent is waiting below, sir," said he, with a mysterious air; "a Carlist officer, I should say, sir, by the looks of him."

Jack took the card.

"Don Miguel Basten. Whoever is that?"

"Someone from the other don, I suppose," said Harry.

"By jingo!" said Jack, with a laugh, "the Spaniard means fighting; well, I'll fight him, and he shall find young Jack Harkaway is a true boy of England."

"Will you see this gentleman, sir?" asked the waiter.

"Of course. Show him in," replied Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"And come back with him, waiter," said Harry.

"Yes, sir."

"We shall want you to interpret for us."

"All right, sir."

A moment after the waiter returned, ushering in a Spanish officer.

Don Miguel Basten was a fine, soldier-like man, well advanced in years, with close-cropped grey hair, and a thick grey mustache.

He doffed his cap on entering, and bowed low to the two lads.

"Will you say that it is Senor John Harkaway that I wish to see?" said he to the waiter.

"This is Senor Harkaway, captain," replied the waiter, waving his hand towards Jack.

"Impossible; he is only a boy. It must be his father I have come to see."

This was translated to Jack, who had, however, given a pretty shrewd guess at what was meant.

"No. Tell Don Miguel Basten that my father is in England, and that I am the person."

This was duly translated by the waiter.

"It is very strange," said the officer. "The Senor Harkaway is very young."

"Yes, señor."

"Ask him if he comes from Don Gil Perez," said Jack.

"Gil Perez?"

"Yes."

"Do you know him, sir?"

"Slightly."

The waiter put on a frightened look, which they could not very well understand.

"Si—si," said the Carlist officer, with a nod of intelligence at Jack. "I have the honor to come on behalf of Don Gil Perez."

"At your service, señor," said Jack, bowing politely.

"Tell the young English gentleman," said the officer, "that he has gravely affronted Don Gil Perez, and that no apology is possible."

The waiter looked aghast at this message.

"My hi, sir," he exclaimed, "this is a precious go. Why, you've been and had a rumpus with the most notorious duellist and the very worst bully in the Carlist army. Oh, my!"

Jack smiled.

"He says that no apology is possible."

"I never intended an apology."

The waiter looked more frightened than ever.

"Translate that, do you hear?" said Jack, sharply.

"But, sir, consider; this Don Perez is a dreadful man with all weapons, and—"

"Do what I tell you, or leave the room," said Jack.

He obeyed.

The officer pursed his brows.

"I did not mean that," he said. "I meant that it would be impossible for us to accept an apology. But the señor is very young—"

"Old enough to take my own part," responded Jack.

"Very good," said Don Miguel. "Then, with the deepest regret, I have to arrange the preliminaries."

"As you please, sir."

"Your weapons?"

"Yours, señor?"

"Sword or pistol?"

"I am equally good, or bad, at both," replied young Jack. "I'm not in the habit of fighting duels. So if Don Miguel Basten will make all the arrangements for us, he may consider them accepted in advance."

This was translated by the waiter.

"One word before we go any further," said the officer, who had been eying young Harkaway with considerable interest. "I said an apology was impossible. Now, my principal is a noted duellist, a dead shot and one of the keenest blades in the army of his Catholic majesty. In consideration of the Senor Inglese's youth, I will undertake to insist upon an apology being accepted, if Senor Harkaway will make one."

"Impossible," returned Jack, hastily. "I am an Englishman, señor, and hold my honor as dearly as any Spaniard born."

"Senor," returned the officer, "your courage does you honor, and I wish this painful task had devolved upon anybody but me. Swords, then, at six in the morning."

"Where?"

"In the valley beyond the church."

"I will be there, señor."

"Is this young gentleman your friend?" asked the officer, bowing to Harry Girdwood.

"Yes."

"I shall have the painful honor of meeting you both, then," said the Spaniard, bowing once more. "Before I go, young gentleman," he added, advancing a step towards Jack, "allow me the pleasure of shaking hands with you, for you are a brave lad."

"With great pleasure," returned Jack, courteously.

They shook hands, and Don Miguel Basten, after looking once more at Jack, bowed himself out.

* * * * *

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed the waiter.

"You've been and gone and done it, Mr. Hark-

away, you have. Oh, how you'll get run through, sir."

"Is it such a very poor look-out for me, then?" asked Jack, with a smile.

"You may as well say your prayers and order your coffin, sir, that's all."

"You're a nice Job's comforter," laughed Jack.

"Why, this beast of a Gil Perez has spitted about a dozen within the last month; he's, without exception, the one cove, sir, that you ought to have avoided. He's a devil, sir."

"I can't help that; it's done, and can't be undone now. You can't unnerve me by any talk, so don't try it on."

"Don't say that, sir. I'll give a year's perks, sir, to see you lard him well, the Spanish beast; but there's no chance of it."

"What do they understand by swords?"

"Rapiers."

"I wish it was broadsword—cut and thrust."

"Why, sir?"

"I know the exercise."

The waiter thought for a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"That's not a bad idea, sir. Take your sword with you. The choice was with you; you said swords, but you didn't stipulate what kind. Insist upon your cut-and-thrust cove, and Don Gil Perez may be taken at a disadvantage. Oh, what larks it would be to see a young English gentleman like you spit this brute of a Spaniard."

"Do they never fight with anything but rapiers?"

"Not often. I've seen many a duel, sir; two or three with the cut-and-thrusters, but they're blessed awkward at it. They have only one cut and one guard, as far as I can see."

"Do you know it?"

"Oh, yes; I can show it to you in half a crack, and proud I am of the honor, sir."

"You seem up to a great many things," said Harry Girdwood. "How did you learn this?"

"I've been in the army here, sir."

"The deuce you have."

"I was in the army in England, and my time was out, so I came travelling here with my master, poor chap; he was an officer in my regiment, and traveling here on half pay, when he got the fever in Cadiz, and it took him off. That's three years ago. I was left without any resources, so I enlisted in the national army for three years. When they were up, I came on here, and, being hard up, got a billet here as waiter."

"What an extraordinary career," exclaimed Jack. "I never heard of a soldier being waiter before."

"What's the odds as long as you're happy? I don't care much for the place, but it's vittles and drink, besides occasional pickings, an' so I manage to grub along."

"Well," said Jack, "now for this famous guard."

The cockney soldier-waiter got a walking stick, and showed them several tricks of fence.

"If you don't mind a slight saber-cut on the shoulder, you can spit your man like a herring."

"How?"

"This way. They cut down thus—it's a vicious cut, meant to break your guard—you mustn't attempt to parry it, but jump in under it. You're nimble enough, I see, a good deal more so than Mr. Bully Gil Perez. Run in sharp as soon as you're engaged, and you have him as safe as eggs is eggs. Oh, my eye! I should be glad."

Jack appeared to be satisfied, but Harry was less confident.

"Very well," said Jack. "Now we'll get to bed, for I want to be up at five. I shouldn't like to be late, or go on the field sleepy at all. Stay, in case anything should happen to me, here's a trifle to remember me, for you seem kind."

The waiter put back young Harkaway's hand firmly, but politely.

"Not to-night, sir."

"What! You're not proud?"

"Not I, sir," returned the waiter. "Pride wouldn't well become one who lives upon tips. No, sir, good luck to you. Wait till the job's over and then double it."

"That's a bargain," said Jack.

"That's business," said Harry Girdwood, laughing, in spite of himself, for his heart was as heavy as lead.

"Good-night."

"Good-night, gents, both of you. Rise with a steady hand and stout heart, and may good luck attend you in the morning."

"Amen to that!" said Harry Girdwood, fervently.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DUEL IN THE VALLEY—THE FACE-GUARD, AND HOW IT TOLD—STRUCK HOME—THE ENGLISH DIVER.

A KNOCK at the door.

"Come in."

"Five o'clock, sir."

"So soon?"

Jack had slept like a top.

Poor Harry Girdwood had hardly closed his eyes the livelong night, and when he had snatched a little fitful slumber, he had dreamed dreadfully.

His visions were all of men slain in single combat.

Fierce Spaniards slaughtering inexperienced duelists, and these pallid men stretched upon the ground, with the life-blood oozing slowly from gaping wounds.

Such were the visions which poor Harry had, and he was not sorry when the time arrived to be moving.

Young Jack sprang from his bed, and slipped into his garments as hurriedly as possible.

Harry Girdwood followed suit.

But he failed to display the same alacrity in his movements.

Slowly and fearfully he prepared for this terrible business.

"Look sharp, Harry."

"All right, Jack, my dear boy."

Harry did not believe that there was much chance for his brave comrade; yet such as there was, he wished him to profit by it to the uttermost; and so he tried with all his might to disguise his own unpleasant feelings upon the matter.

At length they were ready to start.

"Harry," said Jack, earnestly, "tip us your fin, old man."

Harry silently extended his hand.

"Come—come, old sobersides, you mustn't be down-hearted, or I shall go into action with a heavy heart, and that won't improve my chance."

"I'm as cheerful as I can be, but you wouldn't have me feel downright happy, Jack, would you?"

"I tell you what, Harry, I'm as good as a hundred dead men yet. I've a presentiment that I shall pull through this job as I have many a worse one before. I don't fear the bully Spaniard."

"No, Jack. Keep your pluck up."

"Now, Harry," said Jack, "when you are quite ready."

"Now."

"Come on."

"You have nothing to say, Jack, before we start?"

"No."

* * * * *

They were first on the field.

However, they had not long to wait, for in less than three minutes, Don Gil Perez was seen advancing, leaning upon the arms of two brother officers, Don Miguel Basten and a stranger.

Close upon their heels came two more men.

The first of them was the waiter from the hotel.

The other was a thick-set, pale-faced man, with a sort of semi-sailor cut about him.

The former saluted Jack and his companion with the grave dignity peculiar to the Spanish people.

The latter advanced towards Jack and Harry, saluting them as they approached.

"I thought I'd like to look on and see fair play, sir," said the waiter, touching his hat. "I am not a bad swordsman, and if there should be foul play on the part of these dons, I'll stand by you, sir."

"Thank you, and who have you brought with you?" said Jack.

"A fellow countryman of ours. The diver who has been sent for to go down to the *Albatross*."

"Indeed," said Harry Girdwood, turning to the diver. "So you are an Englishman?"

"Yes, sorr," replied the driver, "an' it's proud I am of that same, sorr."

"Well, we won't say English altogether," said Jack, smiling, "a Briton, at all events."

"Yes, sorr."

"Dublin?"

"County Galway, sorr, at your service," returned the diver, with a salute.

"And have you come to see fair play, too?"

"Ye may say that, an' be jabers, I'll see it, the murtherin' bosthoon. Give half a worrd, sorr, an' I'll wire into the lot of 'em at oncen."

Jack laughed.

"There's no need for that at present, thanks," he said; "he's trod on the tail of my coat at present. You can wire in when I've had my turn."

"You're a fine boy, anyhow," exclaimed the diver, in undisguised admiration. "I hope as there'll be little left of the omadhauns for me to pound away at by the time you've done with 'em."

"I'm only going to fight with one of them," replied Jack, with mock gravity; "there'll be plenty for you to peg away at afterwards."

"Hurrah!" cried the Irishman, "that's balm to one's feelings, anyhow."

The others drew near.

Don Gil Perez had divested himself of hat, cloak and coat, and he stood ready in his shirt sleeves.

Jack speedily followed suit.

Harry Girdwood handed Jack his weapon.

Then it was for the first time that Don Miguel discovered the difference in the swords, and he at once interfered.

"Senor Harkaway understood that the combat was to be with sabers, Don Miguel," said the waiter, pretending to interpret.

The notorious duelist curled his lip scornfully when this was told him.

"The English boy is laughing at us," he said. "He only wants a pretext to save his skin."

"No pretext, senor," replied the waiter, promptly. "Senor Harkaway remarks that the gentleman beside you wears a saber. He says, too, that any weapon is indifferent to him."

"The saber be it, then," said Don Miguel; "and let him consider he has not five minutes to live."

The officer who had accompanied them, handed Don Gil Perez his saber, and the latter cut the air viciously with it to try its temper.

"He looks as if he'd like to make passengers of the whole biling of us," said the diver, with a comical grimace.

They were about to give the signal to engage, when Don Miguel advanced to his principal's side, and said something to him in a low tone.

"A brave lad, you say," returned the duellist, coarsely, "and spare him? Bah! he has sought it, and he must pay the penalty. His mother's tears should not save him now. I will have the English dog's life."

He hoped that his adversary would hear it, and that this gentlemanly speech would serve to unnerve him for the combat.

But he just forgot that Jack did not understand a word that was said.

The military Cockney waiter did, however, and he turned away in disgust.

"Beast!" he muttered.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

"Remember your face-guard, sir," said the waiter, quietly. "Hold your elbow low, keep the hilt of your sword straight between your eyes. He's a powerful and wicked brute. If he tries to break down your guard by mere force, don't attempt to parry, but leap aside, and give him your point—not too high, for I don't think you could get it into him about the chest."

The honest waiter's meaning became apparent after the contest was over.

You will see how.

"On guard!"

The swords clashed, and the Spaniard began by a desperate down cut, which Jack, remembering his instructions, leaped aside to avoid, and boring suddenly in, down went the brutal duellist with a gasp.

"Hit!" cried the waiter.

"Spitted, by jabers!"

"Caramba!"

"Maledicion!" cried the wounded combatant.

And staggering up, sword in hand, he made a step forward, as if to cleave his young adversary to the earth, but ere he could reach him, Jack passed his sword through his side. The Spaniard, with a groan, tottered, and fell again in a deathly faint.

Jack at once dropped his sword, and ran forward.

"I hope he is not badly hurt," he said, dropping on one knee by the side of the wounded man.

The officer whose sword Don Gil Perez had borrowed for the combat proved to be a military surgeon.

He examined the wound, and speedily relieved all anxiety upon this head.

"An ugly wound. Care and rest only required," he said.

"I'm heartily glad of that," said Jack, with a deep-drawn sigh of relief.

Having assured himself of his principal's safety, Don Miguel Basten beckoned the waiter to his side.

"Tell the young Inglesi from me that he has conducted himself like a brave lad—that he is an honor to his name and to his country, and that if he wants a friend while here, he may count upon Miguel Basten."

"I will, senor."

"And tell him also that the sooner he is away from this place now, the better it will be. I wish the brave boy well."

This was translated to young Jack, who bowed his acknowledgments, and having resumed his jacket, started with his friends towards his hotel.

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